SCRUTINY

REISSUED IN 20 VOLUMES
WITH AN INDEX AND
RETROSPECT

VOLUME XIV
1946–47

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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A Quarterly Review

XIV

1946–47

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1963

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PUBLISHED BY
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London, N.W. 1
American Branch: 32 East 57th Street, New York 22, N.Y.
West African Office: P.O. Box 33, Ibadan, Nigeria

First issued quarterly at Cambridge 1932–53
Reissued in 20 *volumes, with index* 1963

Printed in the United States of America

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Vol. XIV. No. 1 SUMMER, 1946

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

D. W. HARDING F. R. LEAVIS
L. C. KNIGHTS W. H. MELLERS

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LES CHEMINS DE LA LIBERTÉ[1]

'IT is proof of no untoward pessimism to suppose that the English reader may, if he has not already, soon have abundant cause to feel a like irritation as soon as the fashion-purveyors get to work on Existentialism'.

The fashionable craze has now lasted two years in France and M. Sartre himself has recently confirmed the account given in *Scrutiny*, Vol. xiii, No. 2. 'Qu'est-ce qu'on appelle existentialisme? La plupart des gens qui utilisent ce mot seraient bien embarrassés pour le justifier, puisqu'aujourd'hui que c'est devenu une mode, on déclare volontiers qu'un musicien ou qu'un peintre est existentialiste. Un échotier de *Clartés* signe *l'Existentialiste*; et au fond le mot a pris aujourd'hui une telle largeur et une telle extension qu'il ne signifie plus rien du tout. Il semble que, faute de doctrine d'avant-garde analogue au surréalisme, les gens avides de scandale et de mouvement s'adressent à cette philosophie, qui ne peut d'ailleurs rien leur apporter dans ce domaine; en réalité c'est la doctrine la moins scandaleuse, la plus austère; elle est strictement destinée aux techniciens et aux philosophes'.[2] *L'être et le néant* is by all accounts a long and difficult work: its rôle in the fashionable world seems analogous to that played by *Das Kapital* when Marxism was a literary fashion. And, to extend the parallel a little further, M. Sartre may be said to have published his *Manifest* in the book from which I have just quoted. He recently saw fit to tour Switzerland with a lecture expounding his central doctrines in popular form. And now that translations are available in the U.S.A. and in England, we shall soon be in a position to judge whether the fashion is going to sweep the English-speaking world with the same *furore* it has excited in the French-speaking world.

The works of M. Sartre would therefore seem to call for a sociological as well as a philosophical examination.[3] Not being in a position to undertake either of these tasks, I am constrained to stand by the position taken up in the article referred to. Indeed,

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[1] *L'âge de raison*, by Jean-Paul Sartre, Gallimard, Paris, 125 frs.
Le Sursis, by Jean-Paul Sartre, Gallimard, Paris, 130 frs.
Huis Clos, by Jean-Paul Sartre, *Horizon*, London, 12/6.

[2] *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, by J.-P. Sartre, Les Editions Nagel, Paris.

[3] The reader may care to refer to two articles by Mr. A. J. Ayer published in *Horizon*, Vol. xii, Nos. 67 and 68. In his concluding paragraph he says, 'These analyses of human behaviour seem to be of considerable psychological interest, but, to my mind, they are open to the serious objection that they do not correspond empirically to the way that most people actually behave'.

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further reflection and the opportunity to examine the more recent publications have only confirmed the propriety of the approach made there, which was that M. Sartre's literary works must be criticized in literary terms; the 'philosophical' matter must be weighed and evalued on its own merits as a functional part of a literary whole; the critic's task is to examine the author's standards as exhibited in the novel or play and not to imitate current practice, which consists in picking out the philosophical ideas and relating them to the expositions given in the philosophical works.

In a sense, however, the critic might be thought to be passing a philosophical verdict similar to the one given by Mr. Ayer. If it is true that the existentialist position is based on psychology, on the claim that every man has certain thoughts and feelings hitherto ignored or unrecognized for what they really were, then the difficulty experienced by the critic may be simply that the presentation of these *données* strikes him as unconvincing because he does not recognize them as elements of common experience. Thus, in criticizing *Les Mouches*, I pronounced the crisis a ludicrous pantomime, since such behaviour—the way the dawning of the consciousness of liberty was there presented—struck me as an arbitrary philosophical paradigm. I experience the same difficulty with the works under review, in which M. Sartre further explores the nature of human existence and in particular the notion of liberty and *l'acte libre*.

The problem is similar to the one the reader of *Four Quartets* has to face. The novel concepts are rendered credible by the context, they function as poetry. Mr. Eliot's views (or supposed views) are not there as something to be singled out from the poem and commented on. It is a positive disadvantage to approach the poems with the expectation that they will confirm orthodox beliefs. Just so, sympathy with or hostility towards M. Sartre's central tenets can easily distract the critic.

In this review I propose to discuss the way the notion of liberty crops up in the novels, not because it is one of the central notions of the existentialist philosophy, of which I know next to nothing, but because it seems to me to be the axis on which the novels turn. (*L'âge de raison* and *Le Sursis* are the first two novels of a trilogy entitled *Les Chemins de la Liberté*). The criticism I wish to justify is not that the idea of liberty could not be credibly presented in a philosophical treatise, but that in these novels it nowhere arises inevitably from the context and so appears credible, that, on the contrary, it is imposed from outside. So that even the existentialist who is convinced of the internal coherence of the system should feel unhappy about the internal coherence of the novels.

In *L'âge de raison* we find that M. Sartre has dropped one of the more unsatisfactory features of *Les Mouches*, the hocus pocus with the gods, and has placed the scene in contemporary Paris (June, 1938) instead of in the mythical past. He has, however, retained the atmosphere of Argos, the sweltering summer day, the

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climate (for M. Sartre) of sudden disaster, of far reaching despair, of rottenness. The rottenness extends to man as well as to nature. The Orestes of the novel is Mathieu Delarue, a teacher of philosophy in a Parisian lycée, who comes to see that 'il y avait quelque chose de pourri dans sa vie, dans cet été'.

Mathieu's crisis—the main theme of the book—has a mundane aspect which it may be as well to dispose of at once. It is the crisis of a man in the middle thirties who, disliking the thought of growing up and assuming the responsibilities of maturity, is forced by circumstances to recognize that he is no longer young. *L'âge de raison* ends with Mathieu's reflection: 'il avait fini sa journée, il en avait fini avec sa jeunesse . . . c'est vrai, c'est tout de même vrai: j'ai l'âge de raison'. Secondly, according to M. Sartre, 'entre trente et quarante ans, les gens jouent leur dernière chance'. As *La Dernière Chance* is the title of the last novel of the trilogy, we may suppose that the decisions taken or refused by Mathieu during this crisis will determine his fate finally.

At the same time Mathieu thinks of himself and is thought of by his friends as a man with a passion for liberty (*être libre . . . c'était ce qui lui tenait le plus à coeur*). Mathieu indeed claims that there is nothing peculiar in experiencing this feeling, other people have it, too, 'seulement ils ne s'en rendent pas compte'. The notion, it seems, did not arise as a result of reading Heidegger, but, in a primitive form, was present at the dawn of conscious self-reflection. At the age of seven, he says, 'il croupissait dans une chaleur provinciale qui sentait la mouche' and accomplished his first *acte libre* by smashing an old Chinese jar. 'Il avait pensé: "C'est moi qui ait fait ça!" et il s'était senti tout fier, libéré du monde et sans attaches, sans famille, sans origines, un petit surgissement têtu qui avait crevé la croûte terrestre'. Once when he was sixteen 'il avait l'impression d'être une petite explosion en suspens dans les airs, ronde, abrupte, inexplicable. Il s'était dit: "Je serai libre", ou plutôt il ne s'était rien dit du tout, mais c'était ce qu'il voulait dire et c'était un pari; il avait parié que sa vie entière ressemblerait à ce moment exceptionnel'. He repeated this *pari* at intervals later. 'Il n'était rien d'autre que ce pari'.

On looking back at the age of thirty-four, the only result of this vision had been the resolve to remain honest with himself, to examine his motives scrupulously and to refuse the appeal of all beliefs and causes which could not claim his entire loyalty. 'Son unique soin avait été de se garder disponible. Pour un acte. Un acte libre et réfléchi qui engagerait toute sa vie et qui serait au commencement d'une existence nouvelle'. In the past various temptations had presented themselves. 'Il avait songé à partir pour la Russie, à laisser tomber ses études, à apprendre un métier manuel. Mais ce qui l'avait retenu, chaque fois, au bord de ces ruptures violentes, c'est qu'il manquait de *raisons* pour le faire'. So that when the novel opens Mathieu finds himself in the position of one of Henry James' heroes: he doubts whether anything will ever happen. (*A présent je n'attends plus rien*).

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The point is rather crudely rammed home by an incident which appears to have been inserted *ad hoc*. Mathieu had long ago decided that Communism was incompatible with true liberty. However, when his best friend invites him to join the Party, the refusal costs him a pang. 'Tu es libre', says the Communist, 'mais à quoi ça sert-il, la liberté, si ce n'est pas pour s'engager? Tu as mis trente-cinq ans à te nettoyer et le résultat c'est du vide'. Mathieu regards the Communist as 'real' and ' a man', yet he cannot find in himself 'assez de raisons pour ça'. 'Ma liberté? Elle me pèse: voilà des années que je suis libre pour rien. Je crève d'envie de la troquer un bon coup contre une certitude. Je ne demanderais pas mieux que de travailler avec vous, ça me changerait de moi-même, j'ai besoin de m'oublier un peu. Et puis je pense comme toi qu'on n'est pas un homme tant qu'on n'a pas trouvé quelque chose pour quoi on accepterait de mourir'. His refusal heightens his feelings of self-disgust and he decides: 'je suis un type foutu'. Later this feeling crystallizes in a sort of vision: ' . . . toutes ses pensées étaient contaminées dès leur naissance. Soudain, Marthieu s'ouvrit mollement comme une blessure; il se vit tout entier, béant: pensée, pensée sur des pensées, pensées sur des pensées de pensées, il était transparent jusqu'à l'infini et pourri jusqu'à l'infini'.

Mathieu is faced with a similar decision in his private life. He has had a seven years' liaison with a woman, whom, by the time the novel opens, he has ceased to love. She discovers that she is pregnant and wishes to have a child. Mathieu assumes without questioning her that she prefers an abortion and a great deal of the 'business' of the novel is taken up with attempts to raise the money to pay for the operation. When Mathieu eventually discovers that his mistress wants the child, he feels obliged to marry her and to settle down to married life. But *la liberté* apparently orders him to remain outside the ordinary round of social obligations. 'Et soudain il lui sembla qu'il *voyait* sa liberté. Elle était hors d'attente, cruelle, jeune et capricieuse comme la grâce: elle lui commandait tout uniquement de plaquer Marcelle. Ce ne fut qu'un instant; cette inexplicable liberté, qui prenait les apparences du crime, il ne fit que l'entrevoir: elle lui faisait peur et puis elle était si loin'. This, however, turns out not to be the final truth. He sees later that he is not a mere automaton. His liberty consists in making a responsible decision. 'Il pourrait faire ce qu'il voulait, personne n'avait le droit de le conseiller, il n'y aurait pour lui de Bien ni de Mal que s'il les inventait'. From this responsibility there is no escape. But when he finally decides not to marry Marcelle, he does not feel that he has achieved his liberty. 'Moi, tout ce que je fais, je le fais *pour rien*; on dirait qu'on me vole les suites de mes actes; tout se passe comme si je pouvais toujours reprendre mes coups. Je ne sais pas ce que je donnerais pour faire un acte irrémédiable'.

A number of characters in the novel seem to have been introduced to illustrate the theme of growing old. This is particularly

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true of a couple of young Russian *émigrés* who are afraid of growing up. (' . . . ils ont peur. Peur de la mort, de la maladie, de la vieillesse'). Unfortunately for the reader, Mathieu and, apparently, the author find these 'martyrs de la jeunesse' 'fascinants tout de même'. Mathieu is in love with the girl, Ivich, without knowing it, until an *acte libre* occurs in a taxi. 'Une seconde encore il lui sembla qu'il resta en suspens dans le vide avec une intolérable impression de liberté et puis, brusquement, il étendit le bras, pris Ivich par les épaules et l'attira contre lui'. A similar moment occurs when Ivich gets drunk in a night club and splits her hand open with a knife to shock a woman at a neighbouring table. Mathieu jabs the knife into his own palm and they have to get their hands bandaged up by an attendant, but not before the lovers have clasped their bleeding palms. This extravagance is the immediate consequence of an experience of liberty.

'Elle sourit et dit d'un air d'extase:
—Ca brille comme un petit diamant.
—Qu'est-ce qui brille comme un petit diamant.
—Ce moment-ci. Il est tout rond, il est suspendu dans le vide comme un petit diamant, je suis éternelle'.[4]

This is, I believe, a fair selection comprehending most of what M. Sartre says about liberty in this novel. It is also fair in a way in which, as it were, it ought *not* to be. That is, these extracts lose practically nothing by being taken from their contexts, because they were never really embedded in those contexts. Consequently their credibility rests on their face value which, I submit, is not high. But even if it were as high as one could wish, the objection still remains that the novel is engineered to 'place' these remarks. M. Sartre does not seem to have been primarily interested in writing a novel. (He occasionally allows the plot to degenerate into farce).

Thus we are led to make a twofold criticism: the author knew too well what he was doing and at the same time was uncertain of his purpose. For M. Sartre seems to have been unable to make up his mind about his principle characters. To say this is not to demand that they should be presented in sharper tones of black or white, but that a coherent attitude on the part of the author should underlie and hold together the various ways in which the characters are presented.

Mr. Turnell recently described the work of M. Sartre as 'largely a clinical study . . . '. In a sense, this is true. The persons moving in Mathieu's circle are shown in an unflattering light, one that shows up all blemishes, but not in an *impartial* light. The critical point is to determine whether in choosing the particular

[4]A curious parallel to this scene may be found on page 293 of *L'Invitée*, by Simone de Beauvoir, Paris, 1943. A similarly perverse young girl with whom the hero is on similar terms burns a hole in her palm with a cigarette while watching a dance in a similar night club.

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focus with its strong highlights on what is nauseating (Marcelle's vomit, etc.), M. Sartre persuades us that the positives are, as it were, negatively present, whether there is a tension so created, a liberation of energy.

M. Sartre has protested that 'L'existentialisme n'est pas une délectation morose'. Yet when we force ourselves to review the disgusting details so lovingly exposed, we discover, not that some *moral* depravity is being laid bare, nor yet that the author is enjoying himself in the free delight expressed by 'wallowing', but rather that he is punishing himself by sternly thrusting his own nose into what he finds unbearably nauseating. As a result, there is a kind of sombre energy at work. The scenes, for example, where Daniel, a homosexual who is in revolt against his own perversion, tries to punish himself, vibrate, are 'there' in a way little else in the novel is. Yet one is brought up with a shock when Daniel's state of mind is compared to hell. ('C'était comme ça qu'il imaginait l'enfer: un regard qui percerait tout, on verrait jusqu'au bout du monde—jusqu'au fond de soi').

M. Sartre carries this idea further in his one-act play, *Huis Clos*, where he exploits to the full a notion that runs through the novel, namely, that you can only suffer through the thought that others are condemning you. ('L'enfer, c'est les Autres'). In this limited sense, Existentialism can claim to be a kind of humanism, for it makes man the judge and executioner of man. The characters seem to suffer just as much whether they are condemned justly or unjustly. The question as to what is just condemnation is not raised. Conversely, they seem to be comforted by unjustified approval.

The uncertainty left by these considerations is deepened when we turn to the hero Mathieu, and inquire what is intended by the word *pourri* which he so frequently applies. For here it seems that the uncertainty lies in the first place in the author's conception. On the one hand, Mathieu is represented as an intellectual, a man who is too aware of himself. Yet he displays remarkable obtuseness in his dealings with other people and in his judgments about his own feelings.

A critic in the *New Statesman* (I think) felt that in this apparently representative picture of the preoccupations of a Parisian intellectual, actual preoccupation with things of the mind had been arbitrarily left out. Certainly Mathieu is a philosopher only in term time.

His philosophy is never brought to bear on his personal problems. One wonders: had he never heard of Heidegger? And if so, should not his experiences have affected him as a striking confirmation of the main arguments of the existentialist school?

The difficulty seems to be that M. Sartre has chosen to be 'objective' about someone in a position we may suppose very similar in important respects to his own. In his anxiety not to give himself, as it were, a too flattering part he has tended to humiliate the character at every turn and in so doing has finally

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presented us with a man whose scope is very much narrower than his own. (Whereas part of the feeling of exhilaration given by a *La Nausée* came from the impression that the hero was intellectually on a level with the author's own best self).

If the feeling of self-loathing does not arise from excessive cerebration, we must seek elsewhere. The feeling seems to be a more primitive, immediate reaction. Self-loathing amounting to a loathing of life itself does cover a great deal in the book. In making this judgment neither praise nor condemnation is involved. Feelings of self-disgust may be used to create successful art. If we compare, say, the attitude of the hero in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and that of the 'I' in Hopkins' sonnets, we recognize something like an obsession sentimentally indulged on the one hand and a tense equipose on the other. I should place M. Satre towards the Hamlet end of this rough-and-ready scale—dangerously near the region of Faulkner and Céline.

The search for a 'statement of positives' which would give backbone to the novel has left us only with the decent refusal to present the intellectual's shortcomings in an indulgent light. There remains a kind of positive which exercises a damning qualification of the degree of seriousness we may attribute to the self-criticism. I refer to the sentimentality and equivocal nature of the author's approach to the young girl, Ivich. Not only does the philosopher in his depressed state treat her with abject deference—the author here has limited the range of Mathieu's irony to occasional flashes—but M. Sartre himself uses words like 'noble' and 'tragique' to describe a woman whom at times he seems to have 'placed' in his own mind as essentially petty, if not perverse. This streak of sentimentality, which also marred *La Nausée*, is not, as far as I am aware, forced on the author by his philosophical system. It is the complement of the austerity, which thus appears not as clinical astringency but as the disillusion arising from failure to achieve a belief in the possibility of spiritual health.

M. Sartre might well have entitled the second volume of his trilogy *La Condition Humaine*, if M. Malraux had not already used the title. The scene of *L'âge de raison* had been almost exclusively Parisian, and confined to a section of Paris. *Le Sursis* embraces the whole of France and parts of Europe. The handful of characters of the first part are almost lost on the crowded canvas presented in the second. Yet, as I hope to show, the essence of the sequel is the further evolution of the notion of liberty in the mind of the hero, Mathieu, under the impact of public events. For *Le Sursis* covers the last week of September, 1938, days of false alarms and phoney peace.

After the break with Marcelle, who is married off very conveniently to Daniel, Mathieu is free to pursue his troubled relations with Ivich. She, however, is spending the long vacation in the provinces and Mathieu is sunbathing in the south of France, and incidentally taking an interest in his sister-in-law. The approach of war makes him more than ever apathetic, reduces his stature, drains

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his capacity to feel. He sees no point in his existence. Even the news of the mobilisation fails to awake his interest. (Ca ne l'ennuyait pas: ça ou autre chose . . . Ca ne l'amusait pas non plus . . .). But he declares that his whole past has been wiped out. 'Il pensa: ils m'ont debarrassé de ma vie'. This train of thought deserves more detailed scrutiny for here if anywhere is an instance of the 'philosophy' gaining the upper hand at the expense of probability, since the passage rests on the supposition that the hero never once foresaw that the years 1918-1938 were going to be *l'entre deux guerres*. (His disciple, Boris, *knew* 'depuis le temps qu'on me répète qu'il va y avoir la guerre' and his whole way of life had been based on this knowledge).

'C'est la guerre. Quelque chose qui ne tenait plus à lui que par un fil se détacha, se tassa et retomba en arrière. C'était sa vie; elle était morte. Morte. Il se retourna, il la regarda . . . L'avenir de Mathieu était là, à découvert, fixe et vitreux, hors de jeu. Mathieu était assis à une table de café, il buvait, il était par delà son avenir, il le regardait et il pensait: "La paix . . . " Mathieu pensa "J'ai eu un avenir pacifique". Un avenir pacifique: il avait aimé, haï, souffert et l'avenir était là, autour de lui, au-dessus de sa tête, partout, comme un océan et chacune de ses rages, chacun de ses malheurs, chacun de ses rires s'alimentait à cet avenir invisible et présent. Un sourire, un simple sourire, c'était une hypothèque sur la paix de lendemain, de l'année suivante, du siècle; sinon je n'aurais jamais osé sourire. Des années et des années de paix future s'étaient déposées par avance sur les choses et les avaient mûries, dorées; prendre sa montre, la poignée d'une porte, une main de femme, c'était prendre la paix entre ses mains. L'après-guerre était un commencement. Le commencement de la paix. On la vivait sans se presser, comme on vit un matin. Le jazz était un commencement, et le cinéma, que j'ai tant aimé, était un commencement. Et le surréalisme. Et le communisme. J'hésitaits, je choissisais longuement, j'avais le temps. Le temps, la paix, c'était la même chose. A présent cet avenir est là, à mes pieds, mort. C'était un faux avenir, une imposture. Il regardait ces vingt années qu'il avait vécues étalées, ensoleillées, une plaine marine et il voyait à présent comme elles avaient été: un nombre fini de journées comprimées entre deux hauts murs sans espoir, une période cataloguée, avec un début et une fin, qui figurerait dans les manuels d'histoire sous le nom d'Entre-deux-guerres. Vingt ans: 1918-1938. Seulement vingt ans! Hier ça semblait à la fois plus court et plus long: de toute façon on n'aurait pas eu l'idée de compter, puisque ça n'était pas terminé. A présent, c'est terminé. C'était un faux avenir. Tout ce qu'on a vécu depuis vingt ans, on l'a vécu à faux. Nous étions appliqués et sérieux, nous essayions de comprendre et voilà: ces belles journées avaient un avenir secret et noir, elles nous trompaient, la guerre d'aujourd'hui, la nouvelle Grande Guerre nous les volait par en

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dessous. Nous étions cocus sans le savoir. A présent la guerre est là, ma vie est morte; c'était *ça*, ma vie: il faut tout reprendre du début. Il chercha un souvenir, n'importe lequel, celui qui renaîtrait le premier, cette soirée qu'il avait passée à Prouse, assis sur la terrasse, mangeant une granite à l'abricot et regardant au loin, dans la poussière, la calme colline d'Assise. Eh! bien, c'était la guerre qu'il aurait fallu lire dans le rougeoiement du couchant. Si j'avais pu, dans les lueurs rousses qui doraient la table et le parapet, soupçonner une promesse d'orage et de sang, elles m'appartiendraient à présent, du monis aurais-je sauvé ça. Mais j'étais sans méfiance, la glace fondait sur ma langue, je pensais: "Vieux ors, amour, gloire mystique". Et j'ai tout perdu . . .

' . . . Il se sentait sinistre et léger: il était nu, on lui avait tout volé. Je n'ai plus rien à moi, pas même mon passé. Mais c'était un faux passé et je ne le regrette pas. Il pensa: ils m'ont débarrassé de ma vie. C'était une vie minable et ratée, Marcelle, Ivich, Daniel, une sale vie, mais ça m'est égal à présent, puisqu'elle est morte. A partir de ce matin, depuis qu'ils ont collé ces affiches blanches sur les murs, toutes les vies sont ratées, toutes les vies sont mortes. Si j'avais fait ce que je voulais, si j'avais pu, une fois, une seule fois, être *libre*, eh bien ça serait tout de même une sale duperie, puisque j'aurais été libre pour la paix, dans cette paix trompeuse et qu'à présent je serais tout de même ici, face à la mer, appuyé à cette balustrade, avec toutes les affiches blanches derrière mon dos; toutes ces affiches qui parlent de moi, sur tous les murs de France, et qui disent que ma vie est morte et qu'il n'y a jamais eu de paix: ça n'était pas la peine de me donner tant de mal, pas la peine d'avoir tant de remords . . . '.

This lengthy quotation may serve to make another point. Although French critics, even when hostile to the author's intentions, have praised the style of these novels, there are pages and pages of this kind of thing which strikes me as both wordy and forced. M. Sartre, however, has a talent for reproducing the various styles of slang spoken by the different sections of the nation. Since I have ventured on what should be forbidden ground for the ignorant foreigner, I should add that M. Sartre writes in a style suited to the matter in hand. It does not call attention to itself. But I suspect that a competent critic could make most of the points I have tried to establish through a discussion of the matter, much more effectively by an examination of the language.

But to return to Mathieu. Although the news produces such catastrophic upheavals in his past, the question of the rights and wrongs of the coming war does not arise for him. 'Je pars parce que je ne peux pas faire autrement. Après ça, que cette guerre soit juste ou injuste, pour moi, c'est très secondaire'. He even goes so far as to say, 'Je n'ai jamais pu arriver à me faire une opinion sur ce genre de questions'. He thinks of the war as 'la

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plus absurde des guerres . . . une guerre perdue d'avance', something to be put up with like an illness. In any case, none of his business. What is my business, he asks, and cannot find an answer.

For a philosopher this is a unique quandary. 'Jamais rien ne lui était arrivé qu'il n'eût compris; c'était sa seule force, son unique défense, sa dernière fierté . . . tout ce qui l'avait atteint jusque là était à sa mesure d'homme . . . La guerre le dépassait. Ca n'est pas tant qu'elle me dépasse, c'est qu'elle *n'est pas là*. Où est-elle? Partout . . . Ah! pensa-t-il, il faudrait être partout à la fois . . . il faudrait *me voir de partout*'. These reflections precipitate a vision of the war, the logical starting point of the novel.

> 'Un corps énorme, une planète, dans un espace à cent millions de dimensions; les êtres à trois dimensions ne pouvaient même pas l'imaginer. Et pourtant chaque dimension était une conscience autoneme. Si on essayait de regarder la planète en face, elle s'effondrait en miettes, il ne restait plus que des consciences. Cent millions de consciences libres dont chacune voyait des murs, un bout de cigare rougeoyant, des visages familiers, et construisait sa destinée sous sa propre responsabilité. Et pourtant, si l'on *était* une des ces consciences, on s'apercevait à d'imperceptibles effleurements, à d'insensibles changements, qu on était solidaire d'un gigantesque et invisible polypier. La guerre: chacun est libre et pourtant les jeux sont faits. Elle est là, elle est partout, c'est la totalité de toutes mes pensées, de toutes les paroles d'Hitler, de tous les actes de Gomez (fighting in Spain): mais personne n'est là pour faire le total. Elle n'existe que pour Dieu. Mais Dieu n'existe pas. Et pourtant la guerre existe'.

So, for want of a divine perspective, M. Sartre has chosen to offer us a kind of multiple vision. Besides the Mathieu circle, there are some twenty groups including a schoolmaster in Czechoslovakia, an American journalist and his wife, a party of girl musicians returning from Algiers, Communists, Jews, Pacifists, to name a few. The novel is built on a strict time scheme, almost hour by hour. At each hour we are told what these groups are doing. Sometimes a whole episode is given without interruption, more often various episodes are intertwined or scraps from the lives of one group are inserted in accounts of others. In piecing together these fragments M. Sartre sometimes uses merely verbal links. Thus, for example, when in the long passage already quoted Mathieu says his life was dead we are switched off to a dead man of whom a relation remarks 'C'était un homme pacifique'. We are then returned at once to Mathieu who was thinking 'j'ai eu un avenir pacifique'. Sometimes the device resembles what film cutters call 'montage'. Two events otherwise not related are joined by a similar bodily movement. 'Pitteaux avait sonné, il attendait sur le palier en s'épongeant le front, Georges s'essuyait le front . . .' The effect of bringing disparate events into the same sentence is

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perhaps deliberately confusing.

In thus borrowing with adaptation the technique of Dos Passos and others M. Sartre is not, however, using it for the same purpose. He is not concerned to give a representative cross section of society. His interest is *metaphysical*. The choice of characters, is, however, largely designed to illustrate various attitudes to the war. Many episodes concern men called up because, like Mathieu, they have the 'fascicule 2'. Others show people who hate war, try to desert, or just do not understand, what it is all about. Mathieu says to his Spanish friend: 'Il y a des types qui n'ont rien que leur vie Gomez. Et personne ne fait rien pour eux. Personne. Aucun gouvernement, aucun régime. Si le fascio remplaçait ici la République, ils ne s'en apercevraient même pas. Prenez un berger des Cévennes. Est-ce que vous croyez qu'il saurait pourquoi il se bat?'

M. Sartre has in fact taken such a shepherd and the various serio-comic mishaps which bring him finally to the barracks from one of the main chains of episodes of the novel. But M. Sartre is interested in even more negative approaches. A dead man is used as a foil to the living. He dwells with nauseating detail on the adventures of a paralysed boy, 'A lm. 70 au-dessus de sa tête, c'était la guerre, la tourmente, l'honneur outragé, le devoir patriotique, mais au ras du sol, il n'y avait ni guerre ni paix; rien que la misère et la honte des sous-hommes, des pourris, des allongés'.

Most of these characters are, of course, puppets. The only real agents are the political figures who are more or less free to decide whether war shall be declared. We are given descriptions of the actions and thoughts of Hitler, Ribbentrop, Daladier and Chamberlain. And to hold this mass of material together the war itself is described as a thing. First as something not yet existing. 'La guerre *n'était pas* . . . dans les champs, dans le tremblement immobile de l'air chauffé au-dessus de la haie, dans le pépiement rond et blanc des oiseaux, dans le rire de Marcelle, *elle s'était levée dans le désert* autour des murs de Marrakech'. At the critical moment of the meeting between Hitler and Chamberlain when the decision rests with the latter, the author passes in rapid review the activities of the principal characters at that second (mostly eating and drinking): 'Un instant: elle avait éclaté dans la chambre de Milan, elle s'échappait par toutes les fenêtres, elle se déversait avec fracas chez les Jaegerschmitt, elle rôdait autour des remparts de Marrakech, elle soufflait sur la mer, elle écrasait les bâtiments de la rue Royale . . . elle *n'existait pas*, elle se jouait à pile ou face, entre deux glaces à trumeaux, dans les salons lambrissés de l'hôtel Dreesen'. Finally, the war arrives when Daladier informs Chamberlain that France is determined to go to war to support the Czechs. 'La guerre était là—Daladier regardait Chamberlain, il lisait la guerre dans ses yeux . . . '. The patched-up agreement at Munich fills people with various feelings. Many regret foolish or hasty acts. The two young Russians in particular. Boris had volunteered to serve for three years in the colonial army; Ivich

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abandons herself to a man she hates at the moment when the Czechs receive the official news of their betrayal.

This elaborate construction does not quite come off. The impression of narrow concentration is not dissipated by the mere multiplication of loosely related incidents. The fundamental sameness (*la condition humaine*) is not enlarged and deepened. The two main characteristics of this state are apparently a feeling of loneliness and *l'angoisse*. But in each case we are merely told, *e.g.* 'il se sentait seul' or 'il y avait cette angoisse au creux de son estomac'. Daniel, in particular, is made the peg on which some interesting analyses are hung. I can well believe that they form a valuable appendix to *L'être et le néant*. The centre of the novel remains as before the series of crises in the soul of Mathieu.

Mathieu returns to Paris, which he finds transformed, almost unrecognizable. He contemplates the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 'un homme tout seul, oublié, mangé par l'ombre en face de cette éternité périssable. Il frissonna et pensa: moi aussi, je suis éternel'. His past slips away from him. 'Il lâcha prise, il ne resta plus qu'un regard. Un regard tout neuf, sans passions, une simple transparance. J'ai perdu mon âme', pensa-t-il avec joie . . . A présent c'est mon regard seul qui s'attend dans l'avenir, à perte de vue, comme ces pierres s'attendent, s'attendent pierres, demain, après-demain, toujours. Un regard et une joie énorme comme la mer; c'était une fête. Il posa ses mains sur ses genoux, il voulait être calme: qui me prouve que je ne redeviendrai pas demain ce que j'étais hier? Mais il n'avait pas peur. L'église peut crouler, je peux choir dans un trou d'obus, retomber dans ma vie: rien ne peut m'ôter ce moment éternel. Rien: il y aurait eu, pour toujours, cet éclair sec enflammant des pierres sous le ciel noir; l'absolu, pour toujours; l'absolu, sans cause, sans raison, sans but, sans autre passé, sans autre avenir que la permanence, gratuit, fortuit, magnifique. "Je suis libre" se dit-il soudain. Et sa joie se mua sur-le-champ en une écrasante angoisse'.

' . . . Dehors. Tout est dehors . . . tout ce qui pèse. Au dedans, rien, pas même une fumée, il n'y a pas de *dedans*, il n'y a rien. Moi: rien . . . il se mit à rire: cette libérté, je l'ai cherchée bien loin; elle était si proche que je ne pouvais pas la voir, que je ne peux pas la toucher, elle n'était que moi. Je suis ma liberté. Il avait espéré qu'un jour il serait comblé de joie, percé de part en part par la foudre. Mais il n'y avait ni foudre ni joie, seulement ce dénuement, ce vide saisi de vertige devant lui-même, cette angoisse que sa propre transparance empêchait à tout jamais de se voir . . . Je ne suis rien, je n'ai rien. Aussi inséparable du monde que la lumière et pourtant exilé, comme la lumière, glissant à la surface des pierres et de l'eau, sans que rien, jamais, ne m'accroche ou ne m'ensable. Dehors. Dehors. Hors du monde, hors du passé, hors de moi-même: la liberté c'est l'exil et je suis condamné à être libre . . . Je suis libre *pour rien*'.

M. Sartre seems incapable of proceeding otherwise than by this type of expository statement. It has the effect of emptying

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the character until nothing at all is left. Thus immediately after this vision, Mathieu, not knowing what use to make of his liberty, thinks of drowning himself. 'Pourquoi pas? Il n'avait pas de raison particulière pour se laisser couler, mais il n'avait pas non plus de raison pour s'en empêcher'. For the reader, at this moment, he is a paste-board figure, a placard carrying M. Sartre's view about *la liberté*. Mathieu himself feels cut off from his fellow soldiers: 'il n'était pas avec eux, il n'était qu'un halo pâle et éternel: il n'avait pas de destin'.

The novel ends vaguely in a manner reminiscent of *Les Mouches*. Mathieu refuses to return to his old haunts. 'Il se sentait fort; il y avait au fond de lui une petite angoisse qu'il commençait à connaître, une petite angoisse qui lui donnait confiance. N'importe qui; n'importe où. Il ne possédait plus rien, il n'était plus rien. La nuit sombre de l'avant-veille ne serait pas perdu; cet énorme remue-ménage ne serait pas tout à fait inutile. Qu'ils rengainent leur sabre, s'ils vendent; qu'ils fassent leur guerre, qu'ils ne la fassent pas, je m'en moque; je ne suis pas dupe . . . "Je resterai libre", pensa-t-il'.

Whether *La Dernière Chance* will transform this mass of statement into something living remains to be seen. There are indications in the little booklet that the two novels do not contain the whole of M. Sartre's philosophy, that there is a strenuous ethical side to his thought which so far has not been embodied either in a treatise or a literary work. Be that as it may, the popularity M. Sartre has earned rests on his published work. In speaking of the vogue enjoyed by Existentialism I referred to the less worthy elements. There remains to be considered the considerable number of adherents who have been attracted for more solid reasons, yet not because the technical side of the philosophy appealed to them and perhaps also not because they regarded the published works of M. Sartre as successful literary achievements. Many young people in France respond to the underlying attitudes, to the 'atmosphere' of the literary creations. That this is so, may be gathered from an examination of M. Sartre's philosophy which appeared last year[5] which sets out by attempting to refute the starting points of Existentialism but soon concludes that these highly abstruse positions are not likely to scandalize anyone. What alarms the good Catholic is the negative assumptions of the philosophy. 'Que penser d'une philosophie existentielle qui ignore ou méconnait des structures humaines aussi fundamentales que l'amitié, l'amour conjugal, le sentiment du devoir, l'émotion esthétique, la famille, la vie religieuse, etc. . . . ?' Whether M. Sartre actually does regard these 'structures humaines' as non-existent is not clear. His characters act as if they did not exist, but that is another matter. Yet, as I hope to have indicated, the degree of complicity is not easy to determine. And just because of this the works attract those who go to literature to indulge their

[5] *Le choix de J.-P. Sartre*, by Roger Troisfontaines. Paris, 1945.

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sense of the collapse of all values. There is an active 'fifth column' in the most sanguine humanist who must acknowledge the existence on a wide scale of debased living, crude relationships, lack of roots, etc. Yet the notion of what fine living, human relationships, continuity might be, the ideal of a civilization is not lost. If the two novels under review are not followed by an embodied 'statement of positives', a felt contrast between what is and what might be, we must classify M. Sartre along with Dos Passos, if not with Céline. 'L'existentialisme', as a fundamental attitude in the works under review, 'n'est pas un humanisme'

H. A. MASON.

GEORGE ELIOT (III)

THE other character of whom pre-eminently it can be said that he could have been done only by someone who knew the intellectual life from the inside is Lydgate. He is done with complete success. 'Only those' his creator tells us, ' . . . who know the supremacy of the intellectual life—the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose in it—can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances'. Lydgate's concern with 'ennobling thought and purpose' is very different from Dorothea's. He knows what he means, and his aim is specific. It is remarkable how George Eliot makes us feel his intellectual passion as something concrete. When novelists tell us that a character is a thinker (or an artist) we have usually only their word for it, but Lydgate's 'triumphant delight in his studies' is a concrete presence: it is plain that George Eliot knows intimately what it is like, and knows what his studies are.

But intensely as she admires his intellectual idealism,[1] and horrifyingly as she evokes the paralysing torpedo-touch of Rosamond, she doesn't make him a noble martyr to the femininity she is clearly so very far from admiring—the femininity that is incapable of intellectual interests, or of idealism of any kind. He is a gentleman in a sense that immediately recommends him to Rosamond—he is 'no radical in relation to anything but medical reform and the prosecution of discovery'. That is, the 'distinction' Rosamond admires is inseparable from a 'personal pride and unreflecting egoism' that George Eliot calls 'commonness'. In particular, his attitude towards women is such as to give a quality of poetic justice to his misalliance: 'he held it one of the prettiest attributes of the feminine mind to adore a man's pre-eminence without too

[1]The medical profession, he believes, offers 'the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and social good'.

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precise a knowledge of what it consisted in'. This insulation of his interest in the other sex from his serious interests is emphasized by our being given the history of his earlier affair with the French actress, Laure. As a lover he is Rosamond Vincy's complement.

The element of poetic justice in the relationship is apparent here (they are now married):

> 'He had regarded Rosamond's cleverness as precisely of the receptive kind which became a woman. He was now beginning to find out what that cleverness was—what was the shape into which it had run as into a close network aloof and independent. No one quicker than Rosamond to see causes and effects which lay within the track of her own tastes and interests: she had seen clearly Lydgate's pre-eminence in Middlemarch society, and could go on imaginatively tracing still more agreeable social effects when his talent should have advanced him; but for her, his professional and scientific ambition had no other relation to these desirable effects than if they had been the fortunate discovery of an ill-smelling oil. And that oil apart, with which she had nothing to do, of course she believed in her own opinion more than she did in his. Lydgate was astounded to find in numberless trifling matters, as well as in this last serious case of the riding, that affection did not make her compliant'.

The fact that there is nothing else in Rosamond beside her egoism—that which corresponds (as it responded) to Lydgate's 'commonness'—gives her a tremendous advantage, and makes her invincible. She is simple ego, and the concentrated subtlety at her command is unembarrassed by any inner complexity. She always knows what she wants, and knows that it is her due. Other people usually turn out to be 'disagreeable people, who only think of themselves, and do not mind how annoying they are to her'. For herself, she is always 'convinced that no woman could behave more irreproachably than she is behaving'. No moral appeal can engage on her; she is as well defended by nature against that sort of embarrassment as she is against logic. It is of no use accusing her of mendacity, or insincerity, or any kind of failure in reciprocity:

> 'Every nerve and muscle in Rosamond was adjusted to the consciousness that she was being looked at. She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her *physique*: she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own'.

If one judges that there is less of sympathy in George Eliot's presentment of Rosamond than in her presentment of any other of her major characters (except Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*), one goes on immediately to note that Rosamond gives sympathy little lodgment. It is tribute enough to George Eliot to say that the destructive and demoralizing power of Rosamond's triviality

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wouldn't have seemed so appalling to us if there had been any animus in the presentment. We are, from time to time, made to feel from within the circumference of Rosamond's egoism—though we can't, of course, at any time be confined to it, and, there being no potential nobility here, it is implicitly judged that this case can hardly, by any triumph of compassion, be felt as tragic.

To say that there is no animus in the presentment of Rosamond is perhaps misleading if one doesn't add that the reader certainly catches himself, from time to time, wanting to break that graceful neck, the turns of which, as George Eliot evokes them, convey both infuriating obstinacy and a sinister hint of the snake. But Rosamond ministers too to our amusement; she figures in some of the best exchanges in a book rich in masterly dialogue. There is that between her and Mary Garth in Book I, Chapter XII, where she tests her characteristic suspicion that Mary is interested in Lydgate. The honours go easily to Mary, who, her antithesis, may be said to offset her in the representation of her sex; for Mary is equally real. She is equally a woman's creation too, and equally feminine; but femininity in her is wholly admirable—something that gives her in any company a wholly admirable advantage. Her good sense, quick intelligence and fine strength of character appear as the poised liveliness, shrewd good-humoured sharpness and direct honesty of her speech. If it were not a part of her strength to lack an aptitude for emotional exaltations, she might be said to represent George Eliot's ideal of femininity—she certainly represents a great deal of George Eliot's own characteristic strength.

Rosamond, so decidedly at a disadvantage (for once) with Mary Garth, is more evenly matched with Mrs. Bulstrode, who calls in Book III, Chapter XXXI, to find out whether the flirtation with Lydgate is, or is not, anything more than a flirtation. Their encounter, in which unspoken inter-appreciation of attire accompanies the verbal fence, occurs in the same chapter as that between Mrs. Bulstrode and Mrs. Plymdale, 'well-meaning women both, knowing very little of their own motives'. These encounters between women give us some of George Eliot's finest comedy; only a woman could have done them. And the comedy can be of the kind in which the tragic undertone is what tells most on us, as we see in Book VIII, Chapter LXXIV, where Mrs. Bulstrode goes the round of her friends in an attempt to find out what is the matter with her husband:

> 'In Middlemarch a wife could not long remain ignorant that the town held a bad opinion of her husband. No feminine intimate might carry her friendship so far as to make a plain statement to the wife of the unpleasant fact known or believed about her husband; but when a woman with her thoughts much at leisure got them suddenly employed on something grievously disadvantageous to her neighbours, various moral impulses were called into play which tended to stimulate utterance. Candour

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was one. To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candour never waited to be asked for its opinion. Then, again, there was the love of truth . . . Stronger than all, there was the regard for a friend's moral improvement, sometimes called her soul, which was likely to be benefited by remarks tending to gloom, uttered with the accompaniment of pensive staring at the furniture and a manner implying that the speaker would not tell what was on her mind, from regard to the feelings of her hearer'.

The treatment of Bulstrode himself is a triumph in which the part of a magnificent intelligence in the novelist's art is manifested in some of the finest analysis any novel can show. The peculiar religious world to which Bulstrode belongs, its ethos and idiom, George Eliot knows from the inside—we remember the Evangelicalism of her youth. The analysis is a creative process; it is a penetrating imagination, masterly and vivid in understanding, bringing the concrete before us in all its reality. Bulstrode is not an attractive figure:

'His private minor loans were numerous, but he would inquire strictly into the circumstances both before and after. In this way a man gathers a domain in his neighbours' hope and fear as well as gratitude; and power, when once it has got into that subtle region, propagates itself, spreading out of all proportion to its external means. It was a principle with Mr. Bulstrode to gain as much power as possible, that he might use it for the glory of God. He went through a great deal of spiritual conflict and inward argument in order to adjust his motives, and make clear to himself what God's glory required'.

This looks like a promise of satire. But George Eliot's is no satiric art; the perceptions that make the satirist are there right enough, but she sees too much, and has too much the humility of the supremely intelligent whose intelligence involves self-knowledge, to be more than incidentally ironical. Unengaging as Bulstrode is, we are not allowed to forget that he is a highly developed member of the species to which we ourselves belong, and so capable of acute suffering; and that his case is not as remote from what might be ours as the particulars of it encourage our complacency to assume.[2] When his Nemesis closes in on him we feel his agonized twists and turns too much from within—that is the effect of George Eliot's kind of analysis—not to regard him with more compassion than contempt:

'Strange, piteous conflict in the soul of this unhappy man who had longed for years to be better than he was—who had taken his selfish passions into discipline and clad them in severe robes, so that he had walked with them as a devout squire, till

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now that a terror had risen among them, and they could chant no longer, but threw out their common cries for safety'.

George Eliot's analysis is of the 'merciless' kind that only an intelligence lighted by compassion can attain:

'At six o'clock he had already been long dressed, and had spent some of his wretchedness in prayer, pleading his motives for averting the worst evil if in anything he had used falsity and spoken what was not true before God. For Bulstrode shrank from a direct lie with an intensity disproportionate to the numbers of his more indirect misdeeds. But many of these misdeeds were like the subtle muscular movements which are not taken account of in the consciousness, though they bring about the end that we fix our mind on and desire. And it is only what we are vividly conscious of that we can vividly imagine to be seen by Omniscience'.

Here he is, struggling with hope and temptation, by the bedside of his helpless tormentor:

'Bulstrode's native imperiousness and strength of determination served him well. This delicate-looking man, himself nervously perturbed, found the needed stimulus in his strenuous circumstances, and through that difficult night and morning, while he had the air of an animated corpse returned to movement without warmth, holding the mastery by its chill impassibility, his mind was intensely at work thinking of what he had to guard against and what would win him security. Whatever prayers he might lift up, whatever statements he might inwardly make of this man's wretched spiritual condition, and the duty he himself was under to submit to the punishment divinely appointed for him rather than to wish for evil to another—through all this effort to condense words into a solid mental state, there pierced and spread with irresistible vividness the images of the events he desired. And in the train of those images came their apology. He could not but see the death of Raffles, and see in it his own

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[2]'His doubts did not arise from the possible relations of the event to Joshua Rigg's destiny, which belonged to the unmapped regions not taken under the providential government, except perhaps in an imperfect colonial way; but they arose from reflecting that this dispensation too might be a chastisement for himself, as Mr. Farebrother's induction to the living clearly was.

'This was not what Mr. Bulstrode said to any man for the sake of deceiving him; it was what he said to himself—it was as genuinely his mode of explaining events as any theory of yours may be, if you happen to disagree with him. For the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity; rather the more our egoism is satisfied the more robust is our belief'.

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deliverance. What was the removal of this wretched creature? He was impenitent—but were not public criminals impenitent?—yet the law decided on their fate. Should Providence in this case award death, there was no sin in contemplating death as the desirable issue—if he kept his hands from hastening it—if he scrupulously did what was prescribed. Even here there might be a mistake: human prescriptions were fallible things: Lydgate had said that treatment had hastened death—why not his own method of treatment? But of course intention was everything in the question of right and wrong.

'And Bulstrode set himself to keep his intention separate from his desire. He inwardly declared that he intended to obey orders. Why should he have got into any argument about the validity of these orders? It was only the common trick of desire—which avails itself of any irrelevant scepticism, finding larger room for itself in all uncertainty about effects, in every obscurity that looks like the absence of law. Still, he did obey the orders'.

Here is the commentary on his move to square Lydgate:

'The banker felt that he had done something to nullify one cause of uneasiness, and yet he was scarcely the easier. He did not measure the quantity of diseased motive which had made him wish for Lydgate's goodwill, but the quantity was none the less actively there, like an irritating agent in his blood. A man vows, and yet will not cast away the means of breaking his vow. Is it that he distinctly means to break it? Not at all; but the desires which tend to break it are at work in him dimly, and make their way into his imagination, and relax his muscles in the very moments when he is telling himself over again the reasons for his vow. Raffles, recovering quickly, returning to the free use of his odious powers—how could Bulstrode wish for that?'

It is a mark of the quality of George Eliot's presentment of Bulstrode that we should feel that the essential aspect of Nemesis for him is what confronts him here, in the guise of salvation, as he waits for the death he has ensured—ensured by disobeying, with an intention that works through dark indirections and tormented inner casuistries, Lydgate's strict 'doctor's orders':

'In that way the moments passed, until a change in the stentorous breathing was marked enough to draw his attention wholly to the bed, and forced him to think of the departing life, which had once been subservient to his own—which he had once been glad to find base enough for him to act on as he would. It was his gladness then which impelled him now to be glad that the life was at an end.

'And who could say that the death of Raffles had been hastened? Who knew what would have saved him?'

Raffles himself is Dickensian, and so is Mr. Borthrop Trumbull, the auctioneer, to say which is to suggest that, while adequate to

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their functions, they don't exhibit that peculiar quality of life which distinguishes George Eliot's own creativeness. There is abundance of this quality in the book as a whole; we have it in the Garths, father, mother and daughter, the Vincy family, Mr. Farebrother, the Cadwalladers, and also in the grotesquerie of Peter Featherstone and his kin, which is so decidedly George Eliot and not Dickens.

The weakness of the book, as already intimated, is in Dorothea. We have the danger-signal in the very outset, in the brief Prelude, with its reference to St. Theresa, whose 'flame . . . fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weakness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self'. 'Many Theresas', we are told, 'have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action . . . ' In the absence of a 'coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul' they failed to realize their aspiration: 'Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood . . . ' Their failure, we gather, was a case of 'a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity . . . '. It is a dangerous theme for George Eliot, and we recognize a far from reassuring accent. And our misgivings are not quieted when we find, in the close of the Prelude, so marked a reminder of Maggie Tulliver as this:

> 'Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind. Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognisable deed'.

All the same, the first two chapters make us forget these alarms, the poise is so sure and the tone so right. When we are told of Dorothea Brooke that 'her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might fairly include the parish of Tipton, and her own rule of conduct there', we give that 'parish of Tipton' its full weight. The provinciality of the provincial scene that George Eliot presents is not a mere foil for a heroine; we see it in Dorothea herself as a callowness confirmed by culture: she and her sister had 'both been educated . . . on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne . . . '. This is an education that makes little difference to Maggie Tulliver—who is now, we feel, seen by the novelist from the outside as well as felt from within. Dorothea, that is to say, is not exempted from the irony that informs our vision of the other characters in these opening chapters—Celia, Mr. Brooke, Sir James Chetham and Mr. Casaubon. It looks as if George Eliot had succeeded in

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bringing within her achieved maturity this most resistant and incorrigible self.

Unhappily, we can't go on in that belief for long. Already in the third chapter we find reasons for recalling the Prelude. In the description of the 'soul-hunger' that leads Dorothea to see Causaubon so fantastically as a 'winged messenger' we miss the poise that had characterized the presentment of her at her introduction:

> 'For a long while she had been oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective. What could she do, what ought she to do? . . . The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency'.

Aren't we here, we wonder, in sight of an unqualified self-identification? Isn't there something dangerous in the way the irony seems to be reserved for the provincial background and circumstances, leaving the heroine immune? The doubt has very soon become more than a doubt. When (in Chapter VII) Dorothea, by way of illustrating the kind of music she enjoys, says that the great organ at Freiberg, which she heard on her way home from Lausanne, made her sob, we can't help noting that it is the fatuous Mr. Brooke, a figure consistently presented for our ironic contemplation, who comments: 'That kind of thing is not healthy, my dear'. By the time we see her by the 'reclining Ariadne' in the Vatican, as Will Ladislaw sees her—

> 'a breathing, blooming girl, whose form, not shamed by the Ariadne, was clad in Quakerish grey drapery; her long cloak, fastened at the neck, was thrown backward from the arms, and one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek, pushing somewhat backward the white beaver bonnet which made a sort of halo to her face around the simply braided dark-brown hair'

—we are in a position to say that seeing her here through Will's eyes involves for us no adjustment of vision: this is how we *have* been seeing her—or been aware that we are meant to see her. And in general, in so far as we respond to the novelist's intention, our vision goes on being Will's.

The idealization is overt at the moment, finding its license in the surrounding statuary and in Will's rôle of artist (he is with his German artist friend). But Will's idealizing faculty clearly doesn't confine itself to her outward form even here, and when, thirty or so pages further on, talking with her and Casaubon, he reflects, 'She was an angel beguiled', we are clearly not meant to

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dissociate ourselves or the novelist. In fact, he has no independent status of his own—he can't be said to exist; he merely represents, not a dramatically real point of view, but certain of George Eliot's intentions—intentions she has failed to realize creatively. The most important of these is to impose on the reader her own vision and valuation of Dorothea.

Will, of course, is also intended—it is not really a separate matter—to be, in contrast to Casaubon, a fitting soul-mate for Dorothea. He is not substantially (everyone agrees) 'there', but we can see well enough what kind of qualities and attractions are intended, and we can see equally well that we are expected to share a valuation of them extravagantly higher than any we can for a moment countenance. George Eliot's valuation of Will Ladislaw, in short, is Dorothea's, just as Will's of Dorothea is George Eliot's. Dorothea, to put it another way, is a product of George Eliot's own 'soul-hunger'—another day-dream ideal self. This persistence, in the midst of so much that is so other, of an unreduced enclave of the old immaturity is disconcerting in the extreme. We have an alternation between the poised impersonal insight of a finely tempered wisdom and something like the emotional confusions and self-importances of adolescence.

It is given us, of course, at the outset, as of the essence of Dorothea's case, that she is vague in her exaltations, that she 'was oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective'. But the show of presenting this haze from the outside soon lapses; George Eliot herself, so far as Dorothea is concerned, is clearly in it too. That is peculiarly apparent in the presentment of those impossibly high-falutin' tête-à-tête—or soul to soul—exchanges between Dorothea and Will, which is utterly without irony or criticism. Their tone and quality is given fairly enough in this retrospective summary (it occurs at the end of Chapter LXXXII): 'all their vision, all their thought of each other, had been in a world apart, where the sunshine fell on tall white lilies, where no evil lurked, and no other soul entered'. It is Will who is supposed to be reflecting to this effect, but Will here—as everywhere in his attitude towards Dorothea—is unmistakably not to be distinguished from the novelist (as we have noted, he hardly exists)[3].

There is, as a matter of fact, one place where for a moment George Eliot dissociates herself from him (Chapter XXXIX):

> 'For the moment Will's admiration was accompanied with a chilling sense of remoteness. A man is seldom ashamed of feeling that he cannot love a woman so well when he sees a certain greatness in her; nature having intended greatness for men'.

---

[3]—Though, significantly, it is he alone who is adequate to treating Rosamund with appropriate ruthlessness—see the episode (Chapter LXXVIII) in which he 'tells her straight' what his author feels about her.

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What she dissociates herself from, it will be noted, is not the valuation; the irony is not directed against that, but, on the contrary, implicitly endorses it. To point out that George Eliot identifies herself with Will's sense of Dorothea's 'subduing power, the sweet dignity, of her noble unsuspicious inexperience', doesn't, perhaps, seem a very damaging criticism. But when it becomes plain that in this self-identification such significant matters of valuation are involved the criticism takes on a different look.

> 'Men and women make such sad mistakes about their own symptoms, taking their vague uneasy longings, sometimes for genius, sometimes for religion, and oftener still for a mighty love'.

—The genius of George Eliot is not questioned, but what she observes here in respect of Rosamond Vincy has obvious bearings on her own immature self, the self persisting so extraordinarily in company with the genius that is self-knowledge and a rare order of maturity.

Dorothea, with her 'genius for feeling nobly', that 'current' in her mind 'into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow—the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good' (end of Chapter XX), and with her ability to turn that current into a passion for Will Ladislaw, gives us Maggie's case again, and Maggie's significance: again we have the confusions represented by the exalted vagueness of Maggie's 'soul-hunger'; we have the unacceptable valuations and the day-dream self-indulgence.

The aspect of self-indulgence is most embarrassingly apparent in Dorothea's relations (as we are invited to see them) with Lydgate, who, unlike Ladislaw, is real and a man. Lydgate's reality makes the unreality of the great scene intended by George Eliot (or by the Dorothea in her) the more disconcerting: the scene in which to Lydgate, misunderstood, isolated, ostracized, there appears, an unhoped-for angelic visitation, Dorothea, all-comprehending and irresistibly good (Chapter LXXVI):

> ' "Oh, it is hard!" said Dorothea. "I understand the difficulty there is in your vindicating yourself. And that all this should have come to you who had meant to lead a higher life than the common, and to find out better ways—I cannot bear to rest in this as unchangeable. I know you meant that. I remember what you said to me when you first spoke to me about the hospital. There is no sorrow I have thought more about than that—to love what is great, and try to reach it, and yet to fail".
>
> ' "Yes", said Lydgate, feeling that here he had found room for the full meaning of his grief . . .
>
> ' "Suppose", said Dorothea meditatively. "Suppose we kept on the hospital according to the present plan, and you stayed here though only with the friendship and support of the few, the evil feeling towards you would gradually die out; there would

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come opportunities in which people would be forced to acknowledge that they had been unjust to you, because they would see that your purposes were pure. You may still win a great fame like the Louis and Laennec I have heard you speak of, and we shall all be proud of you", she ended, with a smile'.

We are given a good deal in the same vein of winning simplicity. Such a failure in touch, in so intelligent a novelist, is more than a surface matter; it betrays a radical disorder. For Lydgate, we are told, the 'childlike grave-eyed earnestness with which Dorothea said all this was irresistible—blent into an adorable whole with her ready understanding of high experience'. And lest we shouldn't have appreciated her to the full, we are told that

> 'As Lydgate rode away, he thought, "This young creature has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary. She evidently thinks nothing of her own future, and would pledge away half her income at once, as if she wanted nothing for herself but a chair to sit in from which she can look down with those clear eyes at the poor mortals who pray to her. She seems to have what I never saw in any woman before—a fountain of friendship towards men—a man can make a friend of her" '.

What we have here is unmistakably something of the same order as Romola's epiphany in the plague-striken village; but worse —or at any rate, more painfully significant. Offered as it is in a context of George Eliot's maturest art, it not only matters more; it forces us to recognize how intimately her weakness attends upon her strength. Stressing the intended significance of the scene she says, in the course of it:

> 'The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character'.

This is a characteristic utterance, and, but for the illustration we are being offered, we should say it came from her strength—the strength exhibited in her presentment of Casaubon, Rosamond, Lydgate and Bulstrode. It is certainly her strength as a novelist to have a noble and ardent nature—it is a condition of that maturity which makes her so much greater an artist than (to take up the challenge of Francophil modishness) Flaubert. What she says of Dorothea might have been said of herself:

> 'Permanent rebellion, the disorder of a life without some loving reverent resolve, was not possible to her'.

But that she says it of Dorothea must make us aware how far from a simple trait it is we are considering, and how readily the proposition can slide into such another as this:

> 'No life would have been possible for Dorothea that was not filled with emotion'.

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Strength, and complacent readiness to yield to temptation—they are not at all the same thing; but we see how insidiously, in George Eliot, they are related. Intensely alive with intelligence and imaginative sympathy, quick and vivid in her realization of the 'equivalent centre of self' in others—even in a Casaubon or a Rosamond, she is incapable of morose indifference or the normal routine obtuseness, and it may be said in a wholly laudatory sense, by way of characterizing her at her highest level, that no life would have been possible for her that was not filled with emotion: her sensibility is directed outward, and she responds from deep within. At this level, 'emotion' is a disinterested response defined by its object, and hardly distinguishable from the play of the intelligence and self-knowledge that give it impersonality. But the emotional 'fulness' represented by Dorothea depends for its exalting potency on an abeyance of intelligence and self-knowledge, and the situations offered by way of 'objective correlative' have the day-dream relation to experience; they are generated by a need to soar above the indocile facts and conditions of the real world. They don't, indeed, strike us as real in any sense; they have no objectivity, no vigour of illusion. In this kind of indulgence, complaisantly as she abandons herself to the current that is loosed, George Eliot's creative vitality has no part.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[To be concluded with *Daniel Deronda* and *The Portrait of a Lady*].

GOETHE'S 'FAUST' AND THE WRITTEN WORD

(III) *THE SECOND PART* (*CONCLUDED*)

CLASSICAL WALPURGIS NIGHT.

THIS classical Sabbath (roughly fifteen hundred lines of miscellaneous verse) makes the Germanic Walpurgis Night of the *First Part* seem in retrospect as sober and respectable as a drawing-room comedy. The mythical figures which float along the Pharsalian plains range from sphinxes, griffins, giant ants, pigmies and the Cranes of Ibycus to Nereus, Seismos and Chiron, not to mention droves of dryads, sirens, lamiae, and two quarrelsome and rather boring ancient philosophers. The verse is always in character (in as far as dorids and dryads have any character), and the reader with a taste for Greek myth and legend and 'unnatural history' will find plenty here to interest him. But the reader interested in Faust will find next to nothing to suit his

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tastes; nor am I convinced that the reader full of enthusiasm for the earlier stages in the evolution of the spirit will be thrown into a state of perpetual excitement.

But this long fantastic stretch of verse is a remarkable, a unique achievement; the adjective is for once appropriate. As the glittering wealth of lyric cascades past him, the critic can only grit his teeth to think how little of it can be changed into the human currency of the *First Part*.

When they arrive at this significant locality Mephisto suggests that they should separate, each 'to seek his own adventures'. Mephisto's adventures are chiefly of the amatory kind, and far from successful; he has now suffered an utter relegation to the rank of buffoon in real earnest, and it is with genuine regret that we find him to whom we listened respectfully in the counsels of Heaven now playing a kind of blindman's buff among the wanton Lamiae. No longer the Son of Chaos or a Prince of Darkness, no longer the 'spirit who denies', he is now merely the bogey-man from the North, the simple, crude homespun from the 'wastes of chivalry and priesthood'.

Faust, who goes in search of Helen, does his best to link this vast and amorphous mythic-panorama with the body of the play by indicating the kind of significance it has for him—pointing to the sphinxes, sirens and so on, he cries:

> Vom frischen Geiste fühl' ich mich durchdrungen,
> Gestalten gross, gross die Erinnerungen
>
> (I feel a freshening spirit has swept through me—great figures, great the memories).

Homunculus, the last of the trio, concludes his search for a body by incontinently hurling himself at Galatea's chariot: the glass breaks and he disappears in a bright blaze of obscure glory with which the *Classical Walpurgis Night* ends or, as Goethe more aptly expressed it, 'runs out into the endless'. Homunculus' fate is, I fear, highly significant, though the text does no more than insinuate that it is no unmixed calamity. I think the reader will agree on this point.

We ought to notice this further reminiscence of the Lord's declaration ('as long as he strives, man must err')—again it comes from Mephisto, speaking to Homunculus who proposes to associate himself with the two peripatetic philosophers in the hope that they will help him to find materiality:

> Wenn du nicht irrst, kommst du nicht zu Verstand.
> Willst du entstehn, entsteh' auf eigne Hand!
>
> (Unless you err, you'll never come to understanding. If you wish to begin life, begin life at your own expense!)

But now it is not a statement made, against opposition, in the course of an argument; too flaccid, in its context, to be called

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an epigram, it is better described as a copybook maxim. This suggests a useful distinction (an aspect, indeed, of the *radical* distinction) between the mode of operation of the *First Part* and that of the *Second*: as long as the sentiments, sentences and epigrams fit in with the general tenor of the *Second Part*, it does not matter in the least *who* gives voice to them, for all that is aimed at is a *general impression* of useful activity; all the characters contribute to this impression (it is amazing how busy the phantoms of the classical Sabbath appear to be, all of them rushing about like mad)—even Mephisto adds his mite, after a fashion . . . . and this impression is conveyed rather in the ways employed by the more skilful of the professional propagandists and copy-writers: the message is to be communicated through a vague, soothing harmony, in which it is not so much hammered away at as urbanely assumed. *Agreement*, that is, is the key-note of this part, whereas sharp disagreement and violent conflict was the key-note of the earlier drama, in which the message (itself, as a result, more precise) was communicated through a bitter struggle of opposed elements during which a probing and testing took place simultaneously. It is not only 'tragedy' that is so conspicuously absent from this latter section: it is that sense of conflict which makes the spectator all the readier to accept the final verdict. What the *Second Part* at present lacks is not so much a hero as a protagonist: Mephisto, in the lines I have just quoted, Homunculus, with his 'Dieweil ich bin, muss ich auch thätig sein' ('While I exist, I must be active too') and Faust, in strenuous quest of Helen, all seem for the moment in complete unanimity and concord. Only the reader remains outside this charmed circle, unconvinced or, even worse, apathetic.

Before leaving this scene, I had better make the observation that Goethe was not attempting to do anything other than what he accomplished. My criticisms are of the poet's conception rather than his achievement, for the latter chimes admirable with the former. Eckermann reports Goethe as having said, of the *Classical Walpurgis Night*, 'The mythological figures which crowd upon me are innumerable, but I restrain myself, and merely select those that produce the proper pictorial effect . . . ' Whatever we may feel about Goethe's idea of 'restraint', we have to admit that the pictorial effects are most striking—'finely executed' is the phrase, I think—and the *Peneios* section is particularly fine. Here Goethe's ability to conjure up vivid scenes in a few words is displayed at its best, notably in Chiron's account of the Argonauts—neat character-sketches of the heroes where everything is tightly packed into small and weighty parcels:

> Im hehren Argonautenkreise
> War jeder brav nach seiner eignen Weise . . . *et seq.*

We may find a certain unhappy irony in the fact that, despite the sparse economy of images whereby so sharply-defined a picture is evoked locally (as here and in Homunculus' description of Faust's

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dream, the brightest spot in the Laboratory episode), the overwhelming effect of this and other sections should be one of spendthrift extravagance and almost wicked fluency.

ACT III: THE HELENA.

This act, the first section of the *Second Part* to be finished, was published separately in 1827, under the title 'A Classic-Romantic Phantasmagoria'. It was not inappropriately named. The plot is simple, if intriguing: Helen, returning home after the sack of Troy, ahead of Menelaus who has instructed her to prepare a sacrifice, discovers that she herself is to be the sacrifice[1] and takes refuge in a near-by castle, the property of a kind of glorified Robber Baron, leader of an invading host from medieval Germany. Menelaus is put to flight; Helen and Faust (for he, of course, is the Robber Baron) eventually have a son, Euphorion by name, who in an excess of genius (though remarkably youthful) emulates Icarus and crashes to the ground, whereupon 'We believe we catch sight of a well-known figure in the dead body, but the corporeal vanishes at once, the aureole rises up to heaven like a comet, and the robe, cloak and lyre remain on the ground'. (The 'well-known figure' is Lord Byron, gratifyingly enough). Helen therewith returns to the shades, and Faust and Mephisto finally take their leave of ancient Greece.

Goethe's exposition of the act's meaning needs little expansion: 'Even in the opening acts, the classic and the romantic are constantly being mentioned, so that we ascend, as it were, stage by stage to the *Helena*, where both forms appear fully and find that they are at peace together'. More precisely, the union of Faust and Helen symbolises the Renaissance, in which medieval culture was fused with the culture of ancient Greece; or, to use the terms of aesthetics, it represents the merging of classical and romantic to produce a new poetry—the modern. Euphorion is the 'spirit' of this poetry, and Byron (for whom Goethe had the liveliest admiration[2]) the exemplar.

I think the Euphorion episode is worth a brief consideration for the light it throws on the species of symbolism found in the *Second Part*. In spite of the parental warning, 'hüte dich zu fliegen, freier Flug ist dir versagt' ('beware of flying, unrestricted flight is forbidden you'), Euphorion repudiates all moderation and reason—more like the thoroughbred romantics, we should have thought—

[1]It is surprising to find how very little in the plot-element of *Faust* was actually invented by Goethe. This version of Helen's fate after Troy was taken from the *Troades* of Euripides, and even so minor an incident as the 'false fire' with which the Court Masquerade ends was based on historical facts.

[2]'I could take no-one but Byron to represent our modern age in poetry. Without question he is the greatest genius of the century' (to Eckermann).

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and crashes to his doom. Then follows the famous allusion to Byron. But what are we to gather from this unfortunate accident? That modern poetry has come to a bad end, or merely that Byron has died at Missolonghi and modern poetry has lost its finest flower? Is it a particular or a general reference? And, either way, what deductions are we to make concerning the *value* of this reconciliation of romantic and classical? The thought of Goethe's well-known and unequivocating definition, 'I call the classical *healthy*, the romantic *sickly*', hardly helps to clarify this moot point. It may be objected that these criticisms of mine are querulous and niggling and that Goethe, in the *Helena*, was not writing literary criticism. I admit that it is possible to enjoy the *Helena* however puzzled and dissatisfied one may feel about the Euphorion affair, to enjoy it immensely—but the highest kind of enjoyment (the kind we derived from the so humbler *First Part*) is precluded by this haphazard and shifting pseudo-symbolism. Can the critic blame Goethe for failing to carry through something he did not aim at? Only if he creates the atmosphere proper—and proper *only*—to the purpose he did not intend.

There is perhaps one possible misconception, an easy one to spot, we had better deal with before returning to the text. Stawell and Dickinson, in pointing out that no previous writer had thought of giving Helen a share in Faust's redemption, wrote that 'on the contrary, it had always been treated as the supreme temptation. Perhaps the greatest single achievement in Goethe's remodelling of the old plot lies in his handling of this subject. The evils of lust he had dealt with in the Gretchen-tragedy and he is free to use the pursuit of Helen for a further symbolism'. But, surely, the symbolism of the Helena is 'further' than this remark would seem to imply. The question at issue is rather more radical: whether, in fact, this further symbolism has any relevance *at all* to the Faust who was partly responsible for the Gretchen-tragedy. The *Helena* is, to say the least of it, *overwhelmingly* significant in the macrocosmic aspect of the work, not in the microcosmic: Helen, as Beauty, is a historical rather than a moral factor. It is *possible*, of course, to make out a case for the section as touching the influence of beauty on Faust's struggling soul—what interpretation isn't possible in so gigantic a work of poetry?—but there is such slight evidence in the written word for so doing that the reader can rightly do no more, I feel, than 'bear the possibility in mind'.

Yet, despite all these imminent traps and pit-falls, the reader's first feeling as he listens to the queenly rhythms of Helen's opening speech is one of great relief. After the surfeit of lyric verse which comprised the preceding *Classical Walpurgis Night*, these solid yet subtle iambic trimeters are more than welcome. This short speech sets the scene immediately—it creates *locality* with all the swift certainty of a conjurer producing a rabbit out of a hat—and, as Helen's story is succinctly related, it is a very real, historical Greece that is evoked: the Greece of the tragedians, not the fancy land of dorids, dryads, and song and dance:

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> Bewundert viel und viel gescholten, Helena,
> Vom Strande komm' ich, wo wir erst gelandet sind . . .

Helen, incidentally, is a very impressive *character*—yes, with her one can once again use the terminology proper to the *First Part*. But to say this is not to suggest any modification of my statement that the *Helena* is predominantly operative in the wider, abstract sense of the play. And the fact that Helen (at any rate till she meets Faust) is depicted so sensitively and convincingly in flesh and blood will not prevent most people agreeing with Lewes' blunt dictum that 'the kiss of Gretchen is worth a thousand allegories'. Truth is, it is typical of the fertile invention and enthusiastic creativeness displayed by the poet in the *Second Part* that so magnificently sculped a figure as Helen should—when the dim allegory demands—fade into thin air, leaving behind, so incongruously, only her robes and veil.

Having referred to the main symbolism of the *Helena*, I do not think there is any need to dwell on possible interpretations of particular passages. I doubt whether this kind of interpretation is really very rewarding. Charming incidents like Helen's amazement at the invaders' strange manner of speech (*i.e.*, rhyme) and the lovers' device of rhyming dialogue whereby Faust teaches her to speak his 'language' are self-evident in their significance; that Mephisto-Phorkyas' attack on Helen's flighty maidens is a pragmatical attack on beauty in its more sinister aspects—'Man-lusting you, seducing as seduced, who enervate both, the warrior's strength and the citizen's too'[3]—can be fairly safely deduced. Similarly, when Faust's armies of modern nations clash with Menelaus' forces, we admit to perceiving that ancient and modern are struggling for the possession of beauty; but whether we can go as far as Stawell and Dickinson—the *Helena*, they say, turns on 'the conviction that Beauty needs the well-ordered community'—is a rather different matter. The idea of community certainly does figure in the play, but not until later and in a very different context; and we have already seen that the species of allegory that Goethe is spinning is governed by no severe rules pertaining to consistence or continuity, so we should beware of attributing to every development in the 'story' a corresponding allegorical meaning. Once we allow this kind of ingenuity to creep into our reading we may well find ourselves debating whether Lynceus, Faust's look-out, is 'the idealising love of the troubadours' or 'the medieval Church in her attitude towards the New Learning'.[4] These points are of little importance—unlike the Euphorion-Byron crux, they do not obtrude themselves or demand interpretation.

Nor, it seems to me, does Goethe himself encourage us to overtax our interpretive faculties; the stage directions, indeed, rather suggest the opposite:

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[3]*Cf.* Thomas Mann's short stories, especially *Death in Venice*.
[4]Examples of 'hunt the significance' quoted by A. G. Latham.

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HELEN and CHORUS

> stand astonished and terrified, in a significant, well-planned group

and, at the beginning of the Euphorion episode,

> The music of strings, charming and of the purest melody, sounds from the cavern. All listen to it and soon appear profoundly moved. From here to the marked pause with full orchestral accompaniment.

Costumes, music, 'explosions from the tower', stage-craft, and another of Mephisto's 'asides' to the audience ('you bearded ones who sit expectantly down there')—everything to engage the reader's mental eye and ear, rather than bring his powers of deduction into play.

Predominantly allegorical though the *Helena* is, and so far removed from the 'narrow gothic chamber' in which we first met Faust, yet there takes place during this 'phantasmagoria' a certain development in the character of that earlier Faust. It would, however, be more accurate to express it this way: the impression we receive of the allegorical Teutonic Lord inevitably modifies the impression we have already formed of Dr. Heinrich Faust the hero of the *First Part*, however clear we are about the gulf that yawns between them. There is no thinking or interpreting about this—it simply happens.

Phorkyas describes the leader of the 'barbarians' as 'ein muntrer, kecker, wohlgebildeter, Wie unter Griechen wenig, ein verständiger Mann' ('cheerful, daring, well-favoured and—like few among the Greeks—a sensible man'), and Helen's chorus praise him as one who will 'always succeed in what he attempts'. Besides being the paragon of chivalry, this Faust is certainly an energetic and resolute man, for even in his love-scene with Helen he cries

> Durchgrüble nicht das einzigste Geschick!
> Dasein ist Pflicht, und wär's ein Augenblick
>
> (Do not brood on the rarest destiny! Existence is duty, if it's only a moment').[5]

Dasein ist Pflicht: how excellent a maxim for the ambition-bound Faust of the first soliloquy! And in this way, conscious though we are of the vast dichotomy between the allegorical Faust and the Faust who was symbolic only in suffering the agony of spirit common to humanity, the activities of the former are bound to react upon our memory and valuation of the latter; consequently we are saved from the incredulity we might otherwise experience when we find that, in the final act, Faust has turned into an Empire builder.

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[5]Rilke, after his poetry's many agonies, cries 'Hiersein ist herrlich'; Goethe, after his play's many neglected duties, cries 'Dasein ist Pflicht'.

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The *Helena* concludes with the Chorus choosing to merge into Nature rather than return to Hades with their mistress and so dividing into tree-nymphs, mountain-nymphs, fountain-nymphs and vine-nymphs, and expressing their new characters in amazing virtuosic effusions comparable, for sheer sustained brilliance and vivacity, to nothing in English poetry so much as to Hopkins's *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves*. Then, so that the curtain may fall on a fittingly pictorial tableau, Phorkyas

> rears herself up, giant-like in the prescenium, steps out of her buskins, removes her mask and veil and shows herself as Mephistopheles . . .

ACT IV.

Act IV is undoubtedly the least rewarding part of the whole play. The action is interesting only as a necessary preliminary to the last act, and even so it could, with advantage, be much shorter. The few glimpses we receive of the rehabilitated Faust, however, are of considerable moment.

We are transported back to German soil once more: Faust enters on a convenient cloud, while Mephisto turns up in seven-league boots (a very *Germanic* mode of conveyance, we note). Faust's opening speech—the finest poetry of this act—contains what is presumably a reference to Gretchen:

> Täuscht mich ein entzuckend Bild
> Als jugenderstes, längstentbehrtes höchstes Gut?
>
> (Am I deluded by that entrancing form, like youthful-first, long-denied and highest happiness?)

Thinking of the moral issue enunciated in the *Prologue in Heaven*, we may well feel a certain relief and pleasure in finding that Faust has not quite forgotten the unhappy Gretchen—but the thought is quickly dismissed from his mind, and since Faust does not moralize over it I hardly think we should.

The ensuing dialogue between Faust and Mephisto, on the contrary, is most illuminating. Faust tells his companion that he has conceived a great plan and Mephisto, who seems to have fallen somewhat behind the times (and is, by now, more of a running commentator than an active tempter) replies contemptuously:

> Erräth man wohl, wornach du strebtest?
> Es war gewiss erhaben-kühn.
> Der du dem Mond um so viel näher schwebtest,
> Dich zog wohl deine Sucht dahin?
>
> (Who can guess what you are aspiring to? No doubt it is sublimely bold. Perhaps your mania draws you to the moon, to which you're soaring so much nearer?)

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But Faust retorts:

> Mit nichten! dieser Erdenkreis
> Gewährt noch Raum zu grossen Thaten.
> Erstaunenswürdiges soll gerathen,
> Ich fühle Kraft zu kühnem Fleiss.
>
> (No such thing! This sphere of earth still ensures scope for great deeds. Marvellous things shall be done—strength I feel for boldness and diligence).

Faust has learnt that activity is man's 'natural element'—human activity on this human earth. Being a man of unusual powers he desires not only activity, but active leadership:

> Herrschaft gewinn' ich, Eigenthum!
> Die That ist alles, nichts der Ruhm
>
> (Dominion I'll win, and ownership! The deed is all, nothing the fame).

This plan concerns the reclamation of land from the sea; quite a new kind of ambition for Faust: not a romantic dream now, but a practicable and comprehensible scheme. It is certainly a big job that Faust is setting himself, but (as we will readily admit after the *Helena*) not impossibly big, for at least it is confined to this earth and this life.

When Faust relates the experience which gave rise to this great conception it seems, at first, that irritation at the overbearing 'arrogance' (*Übermuth*) of the sea was the main factor—not a very convincing impetus—but it is clear from what he goes on to say that it was really the consequent *waste*, the useless drowned land, that has aroused his anger:

> Es schleicht heran, an abertausend Enden,
> Unfruchtbar selbst, Unfruchtbarkeit zu spenden;
> Nun schwillt's und wächst und rollt und überzieht
> Der wüsten Strecke widerlich Gebiet.
> Da herrschet Well' auf Welle kraftbegeistet,
> Zieht sich zurück, und es ist nichts geleistet:
> Was zur Verzweiflung mich beängstigen konnte,
> Zwecklose Kraft unbändiger Elemente!
> Da wagt mein Geist, sich selbst zu überfliegen:
> Hier möcht' ich kämpfen, dies möcht' ich besiegen.
> Und es ist möglich! . . .
>
> (It crawls along, in a thousand blind rills, unfruitful itself, spreading unfruitfulness; now it swells and grows and rolls and covers the hateful regions of the barren land. In its powerful urge, wave after wave rules, and then retreats, and nothing is accomplished. It drives me to despair, this aimless strength of intractable elements! So my spirit dares to surpass itself: here must I struggle, this I must vanquish. And it is possible! . . .)

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Unfruchtbarkeit: Faust's animus is directed against unfruitfulness, and to regard this as a *moral* animus, a hatred not merely of inactivity but, further, of all sterile activity, requires only the kind of interpretation which the reader may exercise without hesitation or doubt—interpretation of a different *kind* from that which debated the significance of Lynceus or (which, alas, occurs later in this very act) the battle between the griffin and the eagle.[6] This speech of Faust's, this very moving outburst, is the clearest confirmation we have yet had of the Lord's optimism in that far-off, but still-remembered, *Prologue in Heaven*.

Unhappily this striking development in the original theme is shelved for the present when Mephisto suggests that, as a first step in the furtherance of Faust's plan, they should ingratiate themselves with the Emperor (whom we met at the beginning of the *Second Part*) by helping him quell the rebellion which his incompetence has brought about. This plunges us back into the shadowy realm of phantasmagoria: Mephisto produces the Three Mighty Men out of the Book of Samuel, quite openly remarking:

> . . . allegorisch wie die Lumpen sind
> Sie werden nur um desto mehr behagen.
>
> (allegorical as the rascals are, they will only be so much the apter).

The battle is far from edifying: even after the conscription by Mephisto of innumerable suits of armour inhabited by spare spectres, the issue remains in doubt until further magical effects are brought into action. All this monstrous trickery, serving only to provide Faust with the opportunity to put his plan of reclamation to the test—for it has few attractions in its own right—is part of that disconcerting lack of proportion between ends and means characteristic of the *Second Part*.

The final scene, where the victorious Emperor rewards his ministers, is especially barren. This sketch of Imperial government may well have a certain bearing on the larger theme of the *Second Part*, but what exact bearing is more difficult to say. The scene is written throughout in alexandrines and this, the commentators say, is meant to illustrate the hollow pomp and empty circumstance of the Court. But when we have to jog-trot through two hundred lines of trivial matter in this deliberately stultifying rhythm (so different from the changeful swaying movement of Helen's iambic trimeters) we wonder if there are not easier and pleasanter methods of representing pomp and circumstance.

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[6]Presumable a good omen since the genuine eagle conquers the fabulous griffin—*i.e.*, the lawful Emperor will conquer the false Pretender. On the other hand, it might just as easily be a bad omen, since the enemy's soldiers are genuine human beings, whereas the Emperor depends on Mephisto's army of phantoms and magical effects.

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ACT V.

In this, the momentous last act, we are introduced to Faust's finished work: the kingdom recovered from the sea which, before it existed, Faust had claimed as his reward for helping the Emperor win the war. The Philemon and Baucis episode has, to the modern mind, a tinge of the maudlin about it, and the traditional device of the Stranger (whereby the extent of Faust's operations is disclosed to the reader) is just a little clumsy; yet all this secondary matter is, unlike elsewhere, kept within reasonable bounds. Even so, the unreal, masque-like quality of so much of the earlier action persists, rather incongruously, through the use of names such as Philemon, Baucis and Lynceus. The dear old couple who own a cottage and chapel on a hill within Faust's kingdom might have been better named Darby and Joan, for Philemon and Baucis have connotations altogether out of place here: for a moment the reader wonders whether the Stranger will turn out to be Jupiter, or maybe Mercury. With a similar economy, Lynceus the watchman shares a generic name with the watchman of Faust's medieval castle in Greece and, ultimately, the steersman of the Argo.

But what is of crucial importance, at this late stage in the play, is Faust's achievement itself. What significance has it? Is it a selfish whim, an expression of self-conceit, or is it a work of tangible human value? We may remember the 'most feasible business' which Meercraft the Projector broaches in Jonson's play, *The Devil is An Ass*:

> The thing is for recovery of drown'd land . . .
> I have computed all, and made my survey
> Unto my acre: I'll begin at the pan,
> Not at the skirts; as some have done, and lost
> All that they wrought, their timber-work, their trench,
> Their banks, all borne away, or else fill'd up,
> By the next winter. Tut, they never went
> The way: I'll have it all.

Santayana inclines to the unkind view of Faust's 'project', for he writes that 'this last ambition of Faust's is as romantic as the others . . . It is one more arbitrary passion, one more selfish illusion'. While it is easy to sympathize with Santayana's scepticism—which seems to indicate how *little* of a development in Faust's character even the trained mind may infer from the *Classical Walpurgis Night* and the *Helena*[7]—I do not think there is anything to justify it in the verse of this act itself. Santayana (if I may be permitted the rhetorical assumption) is very probably reasoning along these lines: 'Faust's plan is romantic, arbitrary and selfish because we have no cause to suppose that it would be otherwise'. Yet the reader ought to be conscious of some subtle change in his conception of

[7]And how applicable is Johnson's saying, 'Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation'.

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Faust, for (if I may repeat myself) however allegorical Faust's forcible behaviour and remarkably refreshing *savoir-faire* during the Helen story may have been, they must have had certain, though naturally milder, repercussions, on our idea of Faust's personal character. And, quite apart from all this admittedly vague and shadowy evidence, the very corpus of the fifth act states quite unmistakably that this achievement (for it is an achievement) is in a different class from the ultramundane aspirations of his earlier years (Faust is now, by the way, in 'extreme old age'). As Philemon tells the Stranger:

> Das euch grimmig missgehandelt,
> Wog' auf Woge schäumend wild,
> Seht als Garten ihr behandelt,
> Seht ein paradiesisch Bild . . .
> Rechts und links in aller Breite
> Dichtgedrängt bewohnten Raum.
>
> (What cruelly maltreated you, billow on billow foaming madly, now greets you as a garden, a paradisial picture . . . right and left, far and wide, densely-peopled habitation).

No, I think we are meant to accept this pioneering and colonizing of Faust's at its face value; not perhaps quite at Faust's own estimation, 'the human spirit's masterpiece' ('Des Menschengeistes Meisterstück'), but as, at least, a work of widespread and lasting value to the human community.

It is certainly not an impeccably idyllic prospect that is revealed to us: not only are Faust's underlings engaged in piracy ('Man fängt den Fisch, man fängt ein Schiff'—'you catch a fish, you catch a ship'), but Mephisto and the Three Mighty Men, having been ordered to evict Baucis and Philemon from their cottage because that one tract of independent terrain inside his kingdom is spoiling all Faust's pleasure in his work, wilfully bungle the job and burn down the cottage with the old couple and the unfortunate stranger inside it. We believe in the genuineness of Faust's remorse, however; he had provided another cottage for the old folk to move into: 'Exchange I wished, not robbery'.

The commentator's task is now much simpler, as regards both this scene and the rest of the play. The reclamation of land from the sea and the growth, there, of a community of working-people who are turning the sea's unfruitfulness into fruitful soil: all this belongs to the kind of symbolism that *is* valid and that can be related back, carefully nonetheless, to the theme of 'moral action' enunciated at the very outset of the *First Part*. This, with what happens in the next scene, is in fact the *conclusion*. It is not a 'simple' conclusion, any more than the Philemon-Baucis incident was simply idyllic. Faust has developed out of the stormy, wrong-headed and aimlessly yearning romanticism of his middle-age (no, not his youth—he spent that alone with his books of 'philosophy,

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law and medicine . . . ') into a competent and energetic organiser and leader of men. Not a wise old Socrates, nor yet a Napoleon, and certainly not a Sir Thomas More: his activities are far from purely noble and good. He does not quite fit in—as we have been getting ready to find out for some time past—with the calm thesis of the Lord:

> Wenn er mir jetzt auch nur verworren dient,
> So werd' ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen.
> Weiss doch der Gärtner, wenn das Bäumchen grünt,
> Dass Blüth' und Frucht die künft'gen Jahre zieren
>
> (Though at present his service is confused, soon I shall lead him into clarity. For the gardener knows, when the young tree shows green, that blossom and fruit will grace the future years).

For Goethe's attitude on morality and the active useful life has become less absolute than it was: he, too, has experienced much of human life (as Privy Councillor in Weimar, for instance) and he has discovered that, in practice, the individual's choice is sometimes not between 'right doing' and 'wrong doing' but between a greater and a lesser evil. In the terms of the symbol, Faust's choice was between the greater evil of passively accepting the 'barren kingdom' of the waves and the lesser evil of matters such as the death of Philemon and Baucis and the piratical doings of Mephisto and his minions—that certain licence which, in the achievement of great and permanent works, must sometimes be allowed to the powers of evil. But, as emphatically as possible, I must deny that this implies any moral or artistic disintegration on the author's part: it is simply concomitant on that constant effort to bring his theme out of the philosopher's study and into the arena of actual human living which Goethe makes all through his larger works. Such an effort involves not only a continual statement of moral apothegms but also a continual modification of those apothegms: as it were, a sustained adjustment of the moralist's or philosopher's pronouncements to the ever-appearing limitations of human nature and the complexities immediately born of activity within a community.

In spite of its dubious associations, the term 'practical moralist' will shed a certain light on the nature of Goethe's moral preoccupations. It may perhaps help to explain why Goethe's epigrams are sometimes mutually contradictory: the true 'practical moralist' is always learning, and his ethical maxims will tend to be neat summings-up of particular situations, all of them qualifying each other, few of them intended for categorical imperatives. And, after all, this careful and thoughtful tolerance comes as no bolt from the blue; we saw how deeply it coloured his treatment of the Gretchen-tragedy. Defending him against any possible charge of moral laxity in that matter I quoted that very moving proposition,

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> How could man live at all if he did not give absolution every night to himself and all his brothers?

It seemed to me, then, that the implication was 'use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?'. But now I wonder if it is not a simple rather than a rhetorical question—if it has not this second, more searching, implication: how, in a single world, *can* we live at all without in some way harming some of our brothers? Life, Goethe says so plainly through the whole *Faust*, is a constant unremitting struggle; and in a struggle someone is bound to get hurt. But, still there, is the suggestion that, since this is so, we must make sure that, when we struggle, we struggle upwards (and not along Mephisto's downward path) so that the good we are free to do may outweigh the incidental evil we must do. The evil performed directly or indirectly by Faust in the struggle to create a living empire out of 'drown'd lands' is essentially *incidental*. Boswell described himself as having 'all Dr. Johnson's principles, with some degree of relaxation': I think this quite accurately describes the difference between Faust as we see him now and the 'perfected' Faust visualised and prophesied by the Lord in the *Prologue in Heaven*.

MIDNIGHT.

With a very effective return to the simple dramatic devices employed in the *First Part*, Goethe follows this scene of Faust in remorse with the foreboding visitation of the 'four grey Hags', heralds of Death. Want, Guilt and Need cannot reach Faust: he is a wealthy man. But nothing can keep out Care. The ensuing dialogue between Care and Faust is a model of strict and telling economy, and in its impact on the reader it has a persuasive force which, after all that has preceded it in the *Second Part*, is amazing. Faust's end is linked with his so-distant 'beginning': the larger theme disappears almost as if it had never existed, and Goethe reaches back into the past and picks up the tenuous dim threads stretching from the *First Part* with an unerring swiftness which is, perhaps, the most surprising thing in this very surprising work. It is as if the poet's illuminating vision, having ranged at will over so wide and so curiously populated an area, suddenly contracts itself into a pin-point of intense light focussed on the (now) very human figure of Faust, old and lonely, trapped in his palace by the one phantom that can destroy him.[8] And now Faust's strength is presented just as convincingly as was his weakness in the earlier stages of the play. Soliloquising to himself before Care enters he echoes the desire expressed in the *Easter Morning* scene of the *First Part*, in a fine passage beginning

[8] *Cf.* 'Die Sorge nistet gleich im tiefen Herzen . . . ' ('Care nests in the heart's core instantly') in the first soliloquy, after the Wagner interlude. *Then*, Faust gave in to Care without a fight.

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Noch hab' ich mich ins Freie nicht gekämpft.
Könnt' ich Magie von meinen Pfad entfernen,
Die Zaubersprüche ganz und gar verlernen,
Stünd' ich, Natur! vor dir ein Mann allein,
Da wär's der Mühe werth, ein Mensch zu sein . . .

(I haven't won into the open yet. If only I could remove all magic from my path, forget entirely all these spells, and stand before you, Nature, merely a man! Then to be a man would be worth while).

But, despite his awareness of past mistakes, he refuses to believe that Care has any real power over him:

Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt;
Ein jed' Gelüst ergriff ich bei den Haaren,
Was nicht genügte, liess ich fahren,
Was mir entwischte, liess ich ziehan.
Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht
Und abermals gewünscht und so mit Macht
Mein Leben durchgestürmt; erst gross und mächtig,
Nun aber geht es weise, geht bedächtig.
Der Erdenkreis ist mir genug bekannt.
Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt;
Thor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzend richtet,
Sich über Wolken seines Gleichen dichtet!
Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;
Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!
Was er erkennt, lässt sich ergreifen.
Er wandle so den Erdentag entlang;
Wenn Geister spuken, geh' er seinen Gang:
Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick!

(I have only raced through the world; whatever I desired I seized by the hair—what didn't please me I let fall, what eluded me I let escape. I only desired, I only accomplished, then wished again, and so stormed through my life by force; at first masterfully and mightily, but now I move prudently, and thoughtfully. I realise earth's sphere is enough. The vision upwards is barred to us; Fool, who turns his dazzled eyes that way, poetising about his equals above the clouds! Let him stand firm and look around him here; this world is not dumb to the man of ability. What need has he to soar into the infinite! What he perceives let him comprehend, thus passing through his mortal days. When phantoms haunt him, let him go his way: finding in onward-striding both happiness and pain, he, uncontented every moment!)

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No longer aspiring to a god-like isolation, he renounces all the 'privileges' of magic—encountering the spectre he warns himself at once, 'Nimm dich in Acht und sprich kein Zauberwort!' ('Be careful now, pronounce no magic word!')—and willingly admits his humanity . . . for this is what it means to be a man with men:

> Dämonen, weiss ich, wird man schwerlich los,
> Das geistig-strenge Band ist nicht zu trennen;
> Doch deine Macht, O Sorge, schleichend gross,
> Ich werde sie nicht anerkennen.
>
> (We can hardly break loose from daemons, I know, the rigorous spirit-bond may not be severed; and yet your might, O Care, insidiously strong, I shall never acknowledge).

Thereupon Care breathes upon him and makes him blind, but immediately he rushes out to supervise the final stages of his work of reconstruction. Stawell and Dickinson suggest that this 'blinding' of Faust is 'an inevitable result, for a man of his character, of his resistance to the paralysing influence of Care', but ingenious as this is, I do not think there is sufficient evidence to support it. Faust was most truly (and obviously) blind—blind to the potentialities of life within the human boundaries—in the days when he did *not* resist Care, when in fact he took an inordinate amount of pleasure in relating his cares to his melancholy friend the moon. Faust is now an old man, about to die in any case: when the phantom finds it can do nothing more serious to him, it makes him blind—an act of empty revenge. And then the intensity of his belief in useful activity is impressed even more strongly upon us when we see that his first thought is still for the welfare of his settlers. From impotently bewailing the limitations and disabilities of the human spirit, Faust has so far developed that now he is able to conquer the limitations and disabilities of the human body.

There is just one other point to be mentioned in connection with these self-revelatory speeches of Faust's. This—the way in which Faust continues to avoid using the terms of the Lord's wager with Mephisto—may cause some readers to overlook the all-important linking of Faust's final condition with the heavenly pronouncements of the Lord. Faust's autobiographical reflections are eminently sane and their practical wisdom (*Lebensweisheit* one might call it) is beyond doubt, but it cannot be said that he *sees* his life as a moral struggle. Yet is it an idle paradox to suggest that as Faust comes to lead a more and useful life, an increasingly honourable life, so will his conscious preoccupation with moral and philosophical questions steadily decline? Experience tends to show, I think, that those who are most loquacious about the 'right path' only too often spend their days merely sitting on the fence. The terms of Faust's own 'summing-up' do not coincide with those of the Lord's prognosis because Faust is an active being who must

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limit his attention to the task in hand, whereas the Lord is the Divine Moralist who sees, and speaks, *sub specie aeternitatis*. Though the terminology may not be identical, Faust's salvation will prove that no disparity exists that cannot be bridged by divine forgiveness.

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Faust is so completely taken up with his work that he mistakes the sound of the Lemures digging his grave for that of his work in progress. Is this an ironic touch: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity? Mephisto certainly enjoys the joke: 'Aus dem Palast ins enge Haus, So dumm läuft es am Ende doch hinaus' ('From palace to narrow house, thus stupidly it comes to an end'). But it is Mephisto, in his complacent assurance of victory—

> In jeder Art seid ihr verloren;—
> Die Elemente sind mit uns verschworen,
> Und auf Vernichtung läuft's hinaus
>
> (You are lost in every way—the elements are sworn to us, and all will end in annihilation)—

who is the target for the irony of this scene. In spite of his cynical aside, we notice how smartly he answers to Faust's brisk 'Overseer!' And Faust's speech—his very last—which, concerned with the last touches to his work, is free of all but the most practical and (indeed) sociological moralising, clinches the respect which this act has won for him in so short a space. It needs copious quotation, more for its revelation of Faust's final ideals than for the notorious trick-phrase which deceives Mephisto into a premature assumption of victory:

> Ein Sumpf zieht am Gebirge hin,
> Verpestet alles schon Errungne;
> Den faulen Pfuhl auch abzuziehn,
> Das Letzte wär' das Höchsterrungne.
> Eröffn' ich Räume vielen Millionen,
> Nicht sicher zwar, doch thätig frei zu wohnen:
> Grün das Gefilde, fruchtbar; Mensch und Heerde
> Sogleich behaglich auf der neusten Erde,
> Gleich angesiedelt an des Hügels Kraft,
> Den aufgewälzt kühn-emsige Völkerschaft . . .
> Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
> Der täglich sie erobern muss.
> Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
> Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
> Solch ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
> Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
> Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:
> Verweile doch, du bist so schön!
> Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen

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Nicht in Aeonen untergehn!—
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Geniess' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.

(A marsh lies about the mountains, infecting all that's already won; to drain the putrid swamp, as well: then the last-gained would be the highest gain. I have opened up space for many millions to inhabit, not in security, admittedly, but in free activity. Green the fields, and fruitful; men and herds straightway at home upon the new soil, settled at once on the hill's strength, built up by the daring, industrious peoples . . . He alone deserves liberty, as life, who has to win it every day. And thus, hemmed in by perils, childhood, manhood and old age shall pass their able years. I'd gladly see such swarming crowds, and stand on a free soil with a free people. To that moment I'd cry: But stay, you are so fair! Aeons cannot obliterate the traces of my mortal days!—in anticipation of so sublime a happiness I enjoy the finest moment, now).

Comparing this with the wager as proposed in the Study Scene of the *First Part*—

Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
Verweile doch! du bist so schön!
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn!

(When I cry to the moment: But wait, you are so fair!—then you may throw me into chains, then will I gladly perish!)—

we see that Mephisto has over-reached himself: Faust is not expressing his satisfaction with the *present* moment—only with some hypothetical future moment which, in view of the unending warfare which his people must wage against the encroaching sea (as he explicitly tells us in this last speech), we may be sure would never come. *Im Vorgefühl*: in anticipation, and only in anticipation, can he enjoy this unalloyed contentment. Whatever we may think about the dubious activities which have occupied so much of the *Second Part*, we are bound to agree that Faust and the Lord have won their wager quite fairly, not by a mere verbal quibble. The moral statement is, here, unambiguous: Evil is no irresistible, inexorable force, for human activity—in which it seems most at home—is nevertheless the keenest weapon to turn against it.

Though at this moment 'Faust sinks back, the Lemures catch him and lay him on the ground', the rest of the scene does not collapse into anti-climax: the old Mephisto is most impressively resurrected and, furthermore, related directly back to the Mephisto of the *Prologue in Heaven*:

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'Da ist's vorbei!' Was ist daran zu lesen?
Es ist so gut, als wär' es nicht gewesen,
Und treibt sich doch im Kreis, als wenn es wäre.
Ich liebte mir dafür das Ewig-Leere

('And so it's over!' What are we to gather from that? It's as good as if it had never existed, and yet it runs round in circles as if it *were*. I'd rather have eternal emptiness myself).

And, in spite of his lengthy complaint about the difficulties of snaring the soul 'these days', Hell with its 'horrible jaws' is very real, very present. The ancient Protagonist is spectacularly resurgent, and that element of suspense which animated the beginning of the Faust-story returns again, at its end. Even the struggle for Faust's soul in which Mephisto's devils mass against the attacking angels avoids the ridiculous.

Mephisto's contemptuous reference to the latter contains a rather neat recapitulation of his significance for humanity (you can very easily relate it back to the Lord's comment on Mephisto, 'the spirit of denial'). And it hints at the reason behind Goethe's 'tolerance':

Ihr wisst, wie wir in tiefverruchten Stunden
Vernichtung sannen menschlichem Geschlecht:
Das Schändlichste, was wir erfunden,
Ist ihrer Andacht eben recht.

(You know how, in hours most infamous, we planned the destruction of the human race—the most shameful thing we contrived is just right for their devotion).

The 'most shameful thing' was, of course, the crucifixion of Christ. Thus, Goethe would seem to say, not only may the minor evils which Faust must condone in the course of his significant work be tolerated (there is no question of them being held up to praise), but even that most profound evil of Christ crucified has ultimately created a great religion whose qualities of penetrance and ubiquity might never have been achieved otherwise. But this moralising of mine is intolerably clumsy beside the sparse text which provokes it; the moral suggestion, in this case, is all the more cogent for being placed in Mephisto's mouth . . . out of the jaws of Hell. Another subtle twist given to the situation (here as in the *First Part*) lies in Mephisto's inability to grasp the ultimate implications of what he is complaining of or sneering at.

There is no call to worry over the theatrical manner in which Mephisto and his hordes are foiled. We have already learnt that the former is not altogether invulnerable to the stings of lust; besides the deplorable incident with the Lamiae, he has outlined *his* idea of a great work—a harem in a landscape-garden:

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denn ein für allemal
Denk' ich die Schönen im Plural

(once for all, I think of the Fair Sex in the plural)

and so his lecherous appreciation of the choiring angels ('sexless' though they are), the cause of his downfall, does not astonish us unduly. It is simply an entertaining device for showing us his villainous discomfiture and allowing him to make an appropriate hair-tearing exit: Mephisto's real defeat has taken place earlier.

MOUNTAIN RAVINES, FOREST, CLIFF, WILDERNESS.

The play is over; but we must submit, just once more, to the poet's fertile imagination and his love of huge pictorial canvases:

> You will admit that the conclusion, where the redeemed soul is carried up, was difficult to manage; and that, among such supersensual, scarcely conceivable things, I might easily have lost myself in the void, had I not given my poetic vision a desirable form and substance by the use of clearly-defined figures and conceptions borrowed from the Christian Church.[9]

This progress to Heaven must be received in a spirit of not-too-solemn appreciation. Suffice it to say that the roving lyric moves along the mountainside from *Pater ecstaticus* to *Pater profundus*, to *Pater Seraphicus*, to *Doctor Marianus*, gradually swelling into an adoration of the 'höchste Herrscherin der Welt', the Blessed Virgin. We notice the touching echo, in the Penitent's lovely song, 'Neige, neige, Du Ohne-gleiche', of Gretchen's so different prayer to the *Mater dolorosa*, 'Ach neige, Du Schmerzenreiche'. And then this great work, born from the puppet-fable of Faust that 'murmured with many voices in my soul', ends with those famous (though usually misunderstood) lines,

Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan

(the Eternal-Womanly lifts us above).

The 'Eternal-Womanly' is a good deal more than a reference to Gretchen's intercession on Faust's behalf; it is, I believe, a culminating eulogy of the Blessed Virgin, who in turn is the symbol of divine love and forgiveness. The figure of the Virgin is so powerfully significant in this epilogue that the reader may perhaps wonder what has happened to the less ritualistic Lord of the *Prologue in Heaven*. But the final note in this vast symphonic work is one of forgiveness: there is always a margin for forgiveness at the end

[9]Eckermann's *Conversations*.

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of the last act . . . I think the finest lines, and the most relevant, of this 'holy masquerade' are those spoken by the *Doctor Marianus*:

> In die Schwachheit hingerafft,
> Sind sie schwer zu retten;
> Wer zerreisst aus eigner Kraft
> Der Gelüste Ketten?
>
> (Swept away into frailty, they are difficult to rescue; who ever rends lust's chains by his own strength?)

And who could be a more persuasive symbol for the Lord's mercy—for the gardener's readiness to spare even those trees which have borne ambiguous fruit—than the Virgin? Though there is such a vast difference of tone between the play's beginning and its end, between the simple protestant *Prologue in Heaven* and the rich catholic 'Journey to Heaven', I do not think it is invalid interpretation to find a link, however finely-spun, between the blunt optimism of the Lord and the pure unselfish love with which the Virgin irradiates this closing sequence.

Certainly, if the epilogue has not this kind of significance it can have no other, since the preceding scenes have done all that is necessary in relating Faust's end to his beginning, and done it with magnificent economy and ease: *their* significance is unmistakable.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

Explorations: Essays in Criticism, Mainly on the Seventeenth Century, by L. C. Knights (Chatto & Windus, 10/6). Following *Scrutiny* practice, this book by an editor will not receive further notice in these pages.

Humanitas: A Quarterly Review. Published by the Editors for the University Union, Manchester 15. Price 2/6. All who think (a view finding notable support in a large proportion of the pages following this note) that the function of a university badly needs asserting will welcome this undertaking, in which teachers and students co-operate, to assert it in an appropriate way. There should be wide and practical encouragement.

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PLANNING YOUR LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITY

FIRST YEAR AT THE UNIVERSITY, by Bruce Truscot (*Faber*, 4/6).

'May I say that this book is being written, not primarily for Major Scholars and people holding the Higher Certificate with distinctions, but for more ordinary undergraduates who were not particularly distinguished at school?' The author hopes that the 'average man' will read his guide before leaving school and meditate the practical and utilitarian advice he gives during the Long Vacation before going up. He will probably, the author assumes, have read or be going to read *Red Brick University*, so we may take it that the author is primarily addressing prospective students of the 'modern' universities, and in particular, students in the Faculty of Arts, though, of course, much of what he says applies equally well to students in other faculties and undergraduates at other universities.

The author takes a depressing view of the sense of responsibility and the capacity for independent thought of average Sixth Form boys, but as his experience apparently extends over at least 30 years, we must suppose that he has good grounds for offering the most elementary advice of a kind I should have thought that even a poor average scholar could hardly have failed to pick up in his last two years at school. Indeed the offensively 'American' tone of the whole books suggests that, at least as far as the modern universities are concerned, the difference in level between American and English institutes of higher learning is not great enough any longer to justify the use of 'American' as an epithet of pejorative distinction.

What will be the effect of the author's attitude on these average readers, whether they will take it lying down as appropriate to a superior kind of Head Master 'half-obscured in clouds of academic majesty', or whether they will murmur

> Do not let me hear
> Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly

can for the present reviewer only provide matter for idle speculation. The reasons for noticing this book lie elsewhere.

When Mr. Knights reviewed *Red Brick University* he was inclined to give the author the benefit of the doubt: the book, after all, was full of good things and moved, as far as it went, in the right direction. The interest of this latest book is accordingly that it puts some matters beyond all doubt and 'places' its author in an unmistakable way. For it provides an answer to the first questions we must put in one form or another to anyone who comes forward with a plan for the guidance of youth: is his conception of ends a worthy one? Is his grasp of civilized values firm? Does

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he know in an immediate way what the good life is? The answers to these questions usually come indirectly and we in turn judge them satisfactory or pronounce them unsatisfactory by the light of our own conception, grasp and immediate knowledge. That we have to do here with a crude, oversimplified, insufficiently *liberal* point of view is my conviction after reading the author's final chapter on 'Ideals' and using the severest standards I can command, as the author would wish. For he may be talking to average students, but he does not wish to offer them an average ideal or even a more-than-average ideal which would be open to such criticism. Yet what he offers and the way in which he offers it lack the fineness, the subtlety, the genuinely humane note we expect of the modern Chiron, the ripe scholar in the Humanities. Indeed he reminds me rather of the efficient business manager of a factory turning out one and only one make of car addressing those just entering on junior posts in the firm.

In passing judgments of this kind no reviewer can expect to be taken on trust. So the author must be given space to reveal himself fairly to the reader who can then if he is not convinced put the reviewer in *his* place and dismiss the case. The author opens his chapter on ideals with a description of a painting which 'represented two people walking down a straight road, bordered on either side by a double row of poplars. At the extreme end of the road was a building—a church or a large house of some kind'. It struck the author as 'a representation of the efficient, satisfying life, and of the university life in particular'. He then writes:

> 'On an earlier page I hinted that you should think of yourself, at the beginning of your course, as starting off along a straight road, at the end of which is your degree examination, and try not to stray from the road except for short periods and for a worth-while reason. And now I am suggesting that you should think of your whole life as a straight road, make quite certain that you can distinguish your goal at the end of it, and never once stray from the road, for any purpose whatsoever'.

'You must be a *practical* idealist', he tells his young reader, and warns him to be prepared to meet with ridicule and contempt. The ridicule and contempt are, however, not thought of as coming from those whose ideal is finer and less 'stream-lined', but from *cynics*. The author reassures the young idealist that 'the undergraduate cynic seldom makes good in adult life'. He gives examples of their melancholy fates. Practical idealism, on the other hand, can point to its successes.

> 'The unobtrusive freshman whose devotion to work called forth scathing jests is a barrister at the head of his profession. The athlete who found time on his way home from college to look in at the S.C.M. prayer-meeting began his post-university career by captaining England and ended by becoming one of the most business-like of our Bishops. The short-sighted little

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man who was bent on making his mark at the Union never did—but his persistence availed him in another field and at fifty he was Chairman of half-a-dozen companies'.

The book ends as follows:

'Once you have taken stock of yourself and of your future, set about planning your life at the university, both for the three or four years considered as a whole and for the individual session, term, week, and day. First and foremost, as you will have gathered, comes the integration of your character, temperament and vital interests (religion, friendships, studies, hobbies, etc.) into one whole. Make every day an integrated day. Get up alert and ready for whatever is coming. As you dress, think over the twelve or fourteen hours that lie before you. Plan them so that work, exercise, and relaxation play their respective parts, but no hour, no minute is wasted. When the day is over, don't potter, don't idle, but go straight to bed, ready for the business of the night, which is neither reading, nor thinking, nor planning, but refreshing, dreamless sleep'.

That this is a business ethic will be conceded in one sense, if in no other. I mean that it is couched in the language which business men speak—I judge from advertisements and 'pep' talks. There is a good deal in the book which reminds one of Taylor's factory reforms and time-saving methods. Take this, for example:

'The things I most want to tell you are things you might not think of yourself; and the chief of those, as regards time, is that by gathering up odd fragments of it you can save much more than you could ever think possible. You can write a cheque or a postcard while you wait for a meal; you can look up a reference in the library between two lectures; you can repeat or revise some passage of verse or rule of syntax in a bus, or even in a bus queue. It's no exaggeration to say that on each working day most students could save an hour which would otherwise be sheer loss; and that, assuming a six-day week and six weeks' holiday a year, means about five additional weeks of eight-hour days. It's really worth thinking about, isn't it?'

The author's aim is to help the average man gradually to pass 'from the mental muddle you live in now to a perfectly working forty-hour-week plan of a hundred per cent efficiency'. Not only will 'efficient organization' guarantee you a good Second in an Honours degree, 'the habit of organization soon becomes second nature'. The author's tips, if followed up conscientiously, certainly make for an efficient, if not for a satisfying, life. 'Provided you keep close and true to your ideals, you will find there is nothing soulless about planning, whereas in a life which is no more than a jungle ideals very easily get lost'. Thus we are brought back to the question of the ideals which determine the principles of organization. A different kind of organization—but no less

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'efficient'—was required to turn out Mr. Sturt's 'products' than was needed for Mr. Ford's. A full time-table and a full life are not necessarily the same things. The average student would do well to turn first to the last chapter of this book where he will obtain light on what the author means by phrases such as 'the deeper kind of education'. He can then draw his own conclusions when he finds he is advised to 'organize your outside interests exactly as you organize your work'.

If the reform of the 'modern' universities is going to be carried out in the spirit of this book, readers interested in reform should pay particular attention to what the author has to say about examinations. His views on this topic also throw further light (if needed) on his general outlook. Examinations, he says, are both a test of and an important formative influence on character. 'A man who can tackle his degree examination serenely . . . is likely to come well out of a lesson with an unruly class, an interview for an important job or an address given to an unexpectedly large audience'. 'Despite exceptions which prove the rule, there is some connection between failure in life and failure in examinations'.

He advises the freshman not to listen to people 'who set up a kind of opposition between working for examinations and "real education" '. And he assures his readers that 'good or bad, you will get what you deserve'. 'In a whole generation of experience, I can recall only one undergraduate who I now think was placed in the wrong class of Honours'. This is partly due to the fact that 'Examiners are seldom taken in by the unsound and showy candidate with the fluent pen, and still less by the unintelligent crammer with a flair for spotting questions'. Elsewhere he says that such spotting is seldom possible. 'Only intelligence plus application will win a First, so don't fear that facile cleverness will carry off undeserved prizes at the expense of honest merit'.

A further point of interest to the reformer has already been dealt with by Mr. Knights. It is the author's contention that the university is primarily a research institute. In this book, if I have understood him correctly, the author claims that universities actually began as research institutes. 'What, then, were the universities founded to discover? The answer is: Fresh knowledge'. He describes the foundation of a model *studium generale* with fifty members. 'Each of these *socii* . . . is engaged upon his particular little plot of research . . . '.

But where I should like to go further than Mr. Knights is in combating the author's contention that the function of the university is primarily to pursue knowledge for its intrinsic worth. Knowledge for its own sake, *i.e.*, any knowledge is not an absolute value. Knowledge is only valuable in relation to man's needs and interests. Knowledge which serves no purpose, and I mean no purpose at all, not merely no practical purpose, has no value. The reader may recall a review in this journal by D. W. Harding of a Mass-Observation survey, *May the Twelfth*, which proposed, 'Out of the many possible studies of the Coronation crowds, it seems worth

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while attempting to list the uses to which they put paper. Paper was used in . . . '. Mr. Harding commented, 'The main objection to ideas such as these is not that they are presented half-baked, nor that they are bumptious, but simply that they are not sufficiently interesting'.

H. A. MASON.

CLIO ELEVATED, OR THE SPIRIT OF ENGLISH HISTORY

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLISH HISTORY, by A. L. Rowse (*Jonathan Cape*, 7/6).

Mr. Rowse's book belonged, one had told oneself, to a war-time literary movement, and, having escaped notice in these pages, might—in spite of the author's academic status as a historian—be allowed to remain so belonging. Actually, it has a current significance, as its repeated re-issue suggests—the last coinciding with the appearance of an aid to self-education proffered by Mr. Rowse under the title of *The Use of History*.

The use of *The Spirit of English History?* Mr. Rowse's dedication runs: 'To The Right Honourable Winston S. Churchill, Historian, Statesman, Saviour Of His Country'. There is also a reference to 'a deep satisfaction' on the part of the author 'that at such a fateful moment (1943) . . . the nation has found a leader of the uttermost courage, whose vision is rooted in a historic sense of our past'. These, of course, are preliminary courtesies. But the attitude and tone are not reserved for one personality: they are, in what follows, directed towards a whole continent. The author was not content, as have been some others, to make the best of the British Empire and panegyrise the English nation with an eye only to the home public. His references to America, notably those concerning the *rightness* of the British defeat in the American War of Independence and the withdrawal of the U.S.A. from the League of Nations, represented as a 'derangement rather than as a world catastrophe', leave no doubt as to the audience in mind. Even the imperialist apologism—'Britain was forced to defend her economic and strategic interests by formally annexing territories where her influence had long been paramount . . . she became possessed, still with reluctance, of a vast new empire'—is not irrelevant here, the more so as Mr. Rowse is obviously not laughing up his sleeve. The ability to celebrate, simply, the rise of Indian population from one to four hundred million during the British Raj as 'a marvellous achievement' is notable.

There are sections dealing with national and/or racial characteristics. We, the English-British, are 'imprecise', 'subtly various', 'instinctively sympathetic', 'kindly', 'tolerant' and 'culturally fertile'. The original Britons were 'a feminine people' and the Saxons 'earthy, laborious and stolid . . . a virile, mascu-

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line stock'. 'To this amalgam'—since masculine and feminine elements have been mentioned, 'marriage' would have been metaphorically more suitable—'the Danes and Norse added another element; they were more electric and vital . . . with a passionate feeling for independence'. Rhetorical questions suggest themselves. What of the Danegeld which the 'masculine' Saxons paid, of the submission to Canute and of the defeat of the English at the hands of 'not more than five thousand knights' under William the Bastard? But, says Mr. Rowse, the 'English'—and to speak of 'English' before the Norman conquest seems hardly accurate—'had something easy-going, kindly, slack, about them'. And so on.

Mr. Rowse, besides being vague on racial origins and rather contradictory on national characteristics shows other evidence of a certain naïveté. His praise of the U.S.A. runs parallel with a deep dislike, very proper to 1943, of everything that is connoted by the word 'German'. Most people will be surprised, though perhaps not as pleased as Mr. Rowse would like to think, to know that their racial constitution is 'a great deal nearer to that of France . . . than it is to that of Germany'. They will wonder in what sense, if any, the Entente Cordiale was 'a return to our historic tradition', since France was, for close on a thousand years, regarded as the hereditary enemy, and they certainly may be pardoned for smiling sarcastically at the remark that 'it was long before we learned the lesson that we (England and France) must stand together or perish separately'. Had Mr. Rowse forgotten the events of 1940?

Mr. Rowse's social predilections are a little difficult to follow, various aristocracies, gentries, middle classes and industrial magnates competing for favourable mention. It is noticeable, however, that the 'lower orders' and 'industrial masses', once they have ceased to be the sturdy yeomanry and peasantry of the Hundred Years War period, get short shrift. The 'Agricultural Revolution . . . left a large class of landless labourers . . . Fortunately (sic) for them, the concurrent development of industry absorbed them, with some ups and downs of adjustment'. This is *litotes* with a vengeance. (How interestingly Mr. Rowse has developed since the tough Leftism of *Politics and the Younger Generation*!).

Mr. Rowse adumbrates through implication what may be termed the Doctrine of Historical Inevitability, alias the Logic of History. The peculiar nature of this principle is, first that it is perceptible only after the lapse of centuries, thus partaking of the nature of wisdom after the event, and second that it gives comfort by proving that what happened had to happen and that it was right that it should happen. For instance, it was 'promising for the future' that the 'marriage' of the temperamentally dissimilar 'Britons' and 'Saxons' should take place—though the nuptials were rather blood-stained; it 'lay in the logic of history' 'that the Normans should provide Britain with a governing military caste'; the Norman Conquest though 'a catastrophe for the English at the time' was 'ultimately far-reaching and beneficent in its effects'. There was

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'something inevitable' about the Reformation; Elizabeth's war with Spain was 'probably inevitable'; 'it was inevitable that the Americans should have the reality of independence'. In the American War of Independence 'we were defeated and rightly'; 'there were many predisposing factors which made it inevitable, when one looks back, that the Industrial Revolution should have come about first in this country'. The desire to justify the *status quo* is very touching and calculated to comfort the dead millions whose present bliss was sacrificed for the ungrateful felicity of future generations. One wonders: is Mr. Rowse's prophecy for the future as positive and as comforting as his prolepsis on the past? Or does the inevitability of American priority in the Atomic Revolution disquiet him?

Evidently the spirit of English history is a potent brew. If it intoxicates the addict into a rose-coloured world where, all being right, God's in his heaven, it also blunts the fine edge of the critical faculty, unsteadies the legs and blears the eye. It confuses what was with what might have been and what is with what ought to be. In the hands of the audience for which it was intended it can have undesirable effects with its insistence on nationalism in various guises as a touchstone of development. From the point of view of a professional historian, surely the desirable uses of history demand that historians should not allow their enthusiasm to get the better of their discrimination?

A. J. WOOLFORD.

MR. LEWIS'S THEOLOGY

THE GREAT DIVORCE, by C. S. Lewis (Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 7/6).

When Mr. Lewis's literary criticism has had attention in this periodical it has been understood to show incomprehension, or rather evasion, of the peculiar questions arising from those works which, rightly or wrongly, engage contemporary interest. Mr. Lewis's adjustment to facts of literary politics or fashion, as they may be considered, has been thought representative of a more persistent and deep-rooted hostility, in minds set by certain effects of academic education, to any reformation of habitual attachments or practices. The versatility of this author, and his success in non-literary modes, lead one to expect more pronounced expressions of this attitude in his other works: something similar can be illustrated, but the whole constitution of his apologetical writings cannot be so simply described. The principal fact in explanation is that he has here submitted himself, and is directly and diligently attending, to an object of more definitive and intransigent quality than literature—that is, traditional Christian natural and moral theology, and its restatement for contemporary readers. In the prior consideration he has taken all pains to be faithful, with the result that it would be futile to impugn his formal and specific

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orthodoxy. This achievement alone has been the immediate cause of his success with a sympathetic audience.

No doubt, too, Mr. Lewis has been the first to describe Christian beliefs at all coherently for a number of people, in such books as *Christian Behaviour, The Problem of Pain, Broadcast Talks,* and *Beyond Personality*. The popularization practised in these works, which would not normally call for notice in *Scrutiny*, seems comparatively innocuous; in fact *Christian Behaviour*, the most unpretentious, is quite unobjectionable, and, for B.B.C. work, respectably done. *Broadcast Talks*, however, displays some of the vices of this kind of simplification—mostly, as often happens, unnecessary colloquialisms, foolishness like 'these filthy quislings' (of witches), condonation or exploitation of slackness in language (with 'decent' and 'decency', for instance), and analogies of the type 'rules of morality . . . rules of football', or 'right and wrong . . . not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table': all these attempts to obtain easy assent can only succeed in establishing and fixing agreement on a level far below that desired by the author, and as deceptive and unstable as any 'mere taste and opinion'. Of similar effect and apparent persuasiveness (especially by their invitation to ignore all cautionary considerations) are these lines:

> 'What I cannot understand is this sort of half-pacifism you get nowadays which gives people the idea that though you have got to fight, you ought to do it with a long face and as if you were ashamed of it. It is that feeling which robs lots of magnificent young Christians in the Services of something they have a right to, something which is the natural accompaniment of war—a kind of gaiety and whole-heartedness'.

There is little point in detailing the half-truths of passages like this (but, at least, Mr. Lewis the mediaeval scholar should know that as much a Christian virtue as *mirth* was *sadness*, a peculiar habitual sobriety, more properly to be inculcated than the former, which was a fruit, rather than the mode of right conduct). Among the more unfortunate results of his procedure is the endorsement given to intellectual and moral complacency, so that much of the instruction in a new system of concepts provides additional, rather than removing the old, sanctions for undesirable, irrational attitudes. This is all the more true when, as I have suggested, the assent is previously there, and so immediately granted; and it is with this public, mainly, that the author's sleights go unperceived. At the least, it is thought (and this minimum is taken for all), in popularization he avoids the most patent chasm of all on the fatal path of 'making things easy'—that of making the concepts and facts themselves, the dogma, easy—by which way, of course, there go the promoters of agreed syllabuses, Basic Christianity, and World Ethical Religion. The trouble is that Mr. Lewis is not so conscious of the more insidious temptation to make the *conditions*

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of agreement too easy, for the reader and for himself; just as, though aware of the intellectual dangers of indulgence in merely personal speculation, he is not so aware of the indirect temptation to satisfy personal distastes in the course, and at the cost, of authoritative teaching.

These tendencies are especially discernible in *The Screwtape Letters*, where, for all the author's special claim to confessorial subtlety and knowingness in respect of other consciences, and despite his safeguard 'not all Screwtape says should be assumed to be true even from his own angle', he does not in fact himself renounce any of the usual, less reputable, advantages of putting statements into diabolic mouths with the consequent predisposition of, on the one hand, damnability, or praiseworthiness on the other. In the latter case one finds behind the devilish spokesman the same endorsement of questionable consoling commonplace, to the point of absurdity ('I have known a human defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions'), or greater duplicity:

> 'The results of such a fanciful hatred are often most disappointing and of all humans the English are in this respect the most deplorable milksops. They are creatures of that miserable sort who loudly proclaim that torture is too good for their enemies and then give tea and cigarettes to the first wounded German who turns up at the back door'.

This is rather like something from the pen of a Sunday-newspaper humourist or leader-writer, in defence of the same positions as those held, presumably, by Mr. Lewis and his sympathetic public. Most, however, of his energy and feeling is spent 'satirically', in suggested anathematizations of his Enemies. These are interesting to observe, since most have intellectual and literary accidentals, which are distinguished by considerable irrelevance to the didactic statement ostensibly being made—and so betray the strength of the distorting influence. The siding of the devils with congregational, as opposed to parochial organization is exceptional as a direct, if unimportant, challenge to opinion on the religious side, which Mr. Lewis depends on enlisting; that the detail for once has escaped attention indicates how completely his audience is tuned to welcome and not question his words. For one explanation of his success is that this guaranteed religious sympathy generally operates, in accordance with the facility of comprehension and assent, with little regard to the means by which it has been obtained, and none at all to the integrity of any other ideas that may by the way be proposed or assumed. To the unsympathetic such cases are plentiful and palpable in his writing—only he forestalls comment by placing it pejoratively (in the mouths of his devils and damned). That provision is I think a further measure of the degree to which his works are really meant for the 'prepared' public—the fact overlooked by his believing admirers, who not

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surprisingly find it 'persuasive', 'brilliant' and so on. That is, his proselytizing talent is only ostensible, and if judged by the exigencies of that purpose, very inadequate.

On the secular favours, pretending to appropriateness, worn in the author's religious garments, but which affront the unattached spectator's sight, *Scrutiny's* must dwell. Examples can be listed. One is not surprised to find subscription to superficial reputations (G. B. Shaw, for instance) accompanying irresponsibility in intellectual respects (the 'Historical Point of View' is too easily satirized): to quote an instance (from the diabolic side, it must be remembered):

> 'There have been sad cases among the modern physicists. If he must dabble in science keep him on economics and sociology; don't let him get away from that valuable "real life" '

Acquaintance with Mr. Lewis's literary criticism and the intense unobjective feeling it quite often manifests on certain topics would prepare one for such a sentence as 'A sermon which such people could accept would be to him as insipid as a poem which they could scan'. That is a well-worn mode of literary polemic, contemptible enough, and the undertone is only representative; but it is very deplorable when it issues in accusations that are, in the strictest sense, unscrupulous, invidious, and scandalous:

> 'We have done this through the poets and novelists by persuading the humans that a curious and unusually short-lived experience which they call "being in love" is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can and ought to render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage that does not do so is no longer binding'.

> 'Thus by inflaming the horror of the Same Old Thing we have recently made the Arts, for example, less dangerous to us perhaps than they have ever been, "low-brow" and "high-brow" artists alike now being doubly drawn into fresh, and still fresh excesses of lasciviousness, unreason, cruelty, and pride'.

There is something in this tone akin to that motivating much of the academically-tuned criticism, or the defensive pamphlet, *The Abolition of Man*—the obvious common denominator being resentment of disturbance of habitual channels of feeling. But the moral indignation that always marks the expression of this desperate and stimulated righteousness (its character is always more than literary) is here extremely aggravated, in proportion to the author's evangelistic sanction. Correctness of intention, one can see, does not ensure the integrity of the writing—actual *motives* are much more influential, even essential; and they cannot be exorcized by considerations of, in sum, social acceptability. How little the author has employed the more important kinds of self-control may be appreciated from his other lapses and excesses, which dramatic assignment cannot palliate:

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'Not only a Christian, but such a Christian:—a vile, sneaking, simpering, demure, monosyllabic, mouse-like, watery, insignificant, virginal, bread and butter miss. The little brute. She makes me vomit. She strikes and scalds through the very pages of the dossier, filthy insipid little prude—and yet ready to fall into this creature's arms like any other breeding animal'.

The Screwtape Letters is the least creditable (and most successful) volume. *The Great Divorce* has fewer and less pronounced examples of the same vices; but the performance of this eschatological vision is just as unsatisfactory as that of the other books—which is to say that it fails, especially as propaganda, for the one necessity of this kind of creation is that it should give the *feeling* of completeness, of comprehending inclusiveness. The publisher says that *The Great Divorce* should be 'disquieting'; I doubt whether anyone could find it *satisfying*. The satiric portraits of unredeemed personalities may provide some readers with a certain degree of satisfaction—but it is of a treacherous sort, just as any annoyance caused is of the wrong sort, to the wrong people; because, altogether, they are, morally, entirely *unrevealing*. A quotation will illustrate this deficiency, and also suggest how, again, the author's motives are faulty, his object being, not the definition of specific imperfection (from which Pope's and Bunyan's, as well as Dante's, revelations start), but an effectively recognizable and entertaining combination of social vices: a fair sample of the tone and interest, if the most facile piece, is this:

' "Do they *like* this place?" I asked.

"As much as they'd like anything" he answered. "They've got cinemas and fish and chip shops and advertisements and all the sort of things they want. The appalling lack of any intellectual life doesn't worry *them*. I realized as soon as I got here that there'd been some mistake. I ought to have taken the first bus but I've fooled about trying to wake people up here. I found a few fellows I'd known before and tried to form a little circle, but they all seem to have sunk to the level of their surroundings. Even before we came here I'd some doubts about a man like Cyril Blellow. I always thought he was working in a false idiom. But he was at least intelligent: one could get some criticism worth hearing from him, even if he was a failure on the creative side. But now he seems to have nothing left but his self conceit. The last time I tried to read him some of my own stuff . . . but wait a minute, I'd just like you to look at it" '

Apart from some fairly secure (being non-personal) remarks on the voluntariness of salvation and damnation, the series of untransformed Ghosts composes the volume; it is notable that the already-saved Spirits are only characterized negatively, and that in the only case of a Ghost being saved, becoming a Spirit (pp. 92-3),

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the essential explanation is eluded, whereas the attempt at compensating 'suggestion' admits that it doesn't tell very much:

> 'For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid, but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still and stronger, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialized while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man—an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel . . . '

Giving the 'feel', 'atmosphere' or 'note' of each region or particular spiritual state has always been an important mode of operation of this kind of literature, and none of Mr. Lewis's versions are impressive; sometimes their texture is that of fifty modern novels with or without metaphysical pretensions:

> 'I glanced round the bus. Though the windows were closed, and soon muffed, the bus was full of light. It was cruel light. I shrank from the faces and forms by which I was surrounded. They were all fixed faces, full not of possibilities but of impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded. One had a feeling that they might fall to pieces at any moment if the light grew much stronger. Then—there was a mirror on the end wall of the bus—I caught sight of my own. And still the light grew'.

Much the same occurs in Mr. Lewis's own novels, which have pretensions beyond my scope and patience, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* (examined to some effect by Alistair Cooke in *The New Republic*, April 24th, 1944), and *That Hideous Strength*.

I think, finally, that Mr. Lewis is not sufficiently self-conscious to be a good moralist. I have tried to show in several cases that there may be a submission of personal belief without subordination of his own interests, to doctrinal definition. Mr. Lewis's books bear no marks of ecclesiastical approbation, in spite of his reported popularity with the clergy of the Roman as well as the English Church; but *censores deputati* might well have his case in mind when they consider, as they do not always do, whether more than formal orthodoxy and primary intentions are involved in the effect of any book; whether any good possibly achieved by direct indoctrination may not often be outweighed and sometimes thwarted by the persistent nourishment of false attitudes; and if unscrutinized proselytizing interests and private motives aren't likely to vitiate the proper objects and intention of such writing, just as much as conspicuous adulteration and adaptation of fact and dogma. Ecclesiastical censorship will at least recognize its responsibility here; there is no acknowledgment, from those with responsible rank in the intellectual hierarchy, of the parallel, but more desperate problems of contemporary 'social education'.

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Besides, Mr. Olaf Stapledon, as a representative moralist and propagandist of rationalism, or humanism, or exploration, is somewhat less presentable than Mr. Lewis, who at least has something intellectually respectable behind him, and the elements of wisdom to hand. *Scrutiny* readers ought not to use Mr. Lewis's failings to feed their own complacency.

E. K. T. Dock.

MIXED CURRENCY

THE MINT: A Miscellany of Literature, Art and Criticism. Edited by Geoffrey Grigson (Routledge, 8/6).

Someone with the requisite staying-power, sufficient time to spare and easy access to bookshops ought to make a comprehensive survey of the numerous little magazines of literary pretensions which are such a characteristic feature of the contemporary scene. The names of most of the older ones may be found in Mr. Denys Val Baker's P.E.N. book, *Little Reviews, 1919-1943*, which attempts something like a history of literary periodicals between the wars. It is largely uncritical and often inaccurate, while its use of the term 'little review' is elastic enough to cover *The Criterion*, but it does nevertheless bring home the fact that there are at present far fewer literary periodicals of any weight or authority than in 1919. What we have instead is a mushroom growth of little magazines and miscellanies hardly to be called reviews—the name ought to imply, one would think, at least some show of a critical policy. These represent small groups more or less out of touch with each other and with any common centre of critical opinion. They are usually defended as at least providing a field for the exercise of new talent, but this plea is seen to be inadmissible when it is realized that in such an atmosphere a new writer achieves a coterie reputation and a market value without ever once coming up against any other standards than those of his group. When the critical periodical performed a real function it defined and made explicit standards and values implicitly acknowledged by the public for which it spoke and over which it exercised its influence and authority. There was a public, there were standards, and there was a common critical idiom. None of these conditions can be assumed to-day, and a serious periodical has to begin by rallying the public that it believes to be potentially available—a task calling for a particularly conscious effort. In practice the coteries usually adopt some eccentric code of their own—political, economic, psychological or merely surrealist—with the appropriate jargon, or they accept without question the latest Bloomsbury fashions as mediated by *Horizon* or *The New Statesman*.

These points have been made often enough in *Scrutiny*, but it is unhappily still necessary to insist on them. Many people regard *Horizon* as the embodiment of modern English culture at its best, and not as a disappointingly unequal magazine which occasionally

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publishes an interesting article but which has no real policy or standards beyond fashionable eclecticism and a feeling that culture shouldn't be made to toe the party line. And even Mr. Koestler can be surprisingly naïve about weekly reviewing.[1] The explorer who takes on the survey suggested will find that reputations are come by as easily in the little reviews as in the Sunday paper advertisements. An extraordinary variety of poets and novelists are assumed to have the status of classics: Mr. Warner is considered another Kafka, Mr. Dylan Thomas is discussed as if he were on the same level as Yeats, and Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Connolly are quoted as critical authorities comparable to Mr. Eliot.[2]

The Mint, not a little review but a substantial bound volume, would seem at first sight to offer a welcome exception to the above remarks. It claims to be 'an international miscellany of humanism': 'without being narrow it is not political' and it is to avoid the fashionable expedients and poses. The preface asserts the primacy of 'the literary conscience' and a belief in 'certain timeless over-riding values': 'art implies effort, is not a fashionable aesthetic eclecticism, not a surrender, not a wallow, but a matter of this literary conscience, this conscious control of doing excellently and honestly according to one's powers something big or something small with all the talent and receptivity one has the luck to possess and the duty to develop'. Admirable, one feels, in the abstract, but perhaps a little vague? The other explicit aim, to bridge the gap between scholarship and original writing, seems much more questionable. The real problem is rather that both scholarship and original writing have become divorced from criticism.

The table of contents does not reassure us. Martin Buber, W. H. Auden, Seán O'Casey, James T. Farrell, Graham Greene, W. J. Turner, Rhys Davies, Nikolaus Pevsner—the list is certainly miscellaneous enough, and suggests one of the better numbers of *Horizon*. Turning first to the general and critical essays we find that they can be said to share a concern for 'timeless over-riding values' only in the most general sense: we are conscious not so much of common standards as of an uneasy feeling that there ought to be such things. Martin Buber's speech on *The Education of Character* makes some useful points in spite of a Teutonic pretentiousness of style, some of which may be the fault of the translator. Mr. West's slapdash essay, *The Precious Myth*, defends the English liberal tradition of the integrity and worth of the individual. He says incidentally some sensible things about French Resistance literature, Palinurus and Mr. Koestler, quoting the latter's Philistine advice to the common reader: 'Never force yourself to read a book—it is a wasted effort'. Mr. Farrell is on the

[1]See the review of *The Yogi and the Commissar* by Mr. H. A. Mason in the last number of *Scrutiny*.

[2]'Three of our best critics', says a recent writer in *The Times Literary Supplement*, referring to Mr. Mortimer, Mr. Connolly and Virginia Woolf.

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side of the angels against the commercial culture represented by Hollywood; his article is sound but long-winded. Mr. Salmon discusses the decadence of spoken English and the possibility of its re-creation through broadcasting. Mr. Barfield's attempt to re-value the Psalms contains several references to the doctrines of Rudolf Steiner and some disconcerting lapses into sheer vulgarity: 'The Law, with all its severity, was not Katisha to the righteous Jew, it was Yum-Yum herself'. The more scholarly articles are interesting but they have a somewhat marginal significance. Professor Häusermann of Geneva traces the changes in Yeats's idea of Shelley at different stages of his own career. Mr. Grigson contributes a long and rather diffuse essay on William Barnes which has considerable interest but tends to waste time on such side-issues as Barnes's use of technical devices from Persian, Hebrew and Welsh poetry. There are also some hitherto unpublished poems and fragments by Clare.

The one contribution on the visual arts, *The Architecture of Mannerism*, by Mr. Pevsner, is a solid and well-illustrated piece of art-history amplifying and developing certain points made in his *Outline of European Architecture* in the Pelican series.[3]

The doubts raised by the critical essays are more than confirmed by the original work. Auden's four poems show him still performing all his tricks, with the usual defensive ironies and ambiguities. Sometimes one wonders whether he is deliberately insulting the reader's intelligence:

> Once we could have made the docks,
> Now it is too late to fly;
> Once too often you and I
> Did what we should not have done;
> Round the rampant rugged rocks
> Rude and ragged rascals run.

There is the familiar psychological knowingness, the unsupported pretensions to moral profundity, the modulations into Yeats and out again, the pseudo-Metaphysical imagery—'That this round O of faithfulness we swear May never wither to an empty nought Nor petrify into a square'—the irritating technical devices serving no poetic purpose (in the fourth of these poems rhyme is replaced by a jingling of words identical in sound but not in meaning) and the alternation of smartness with simple emotional indulgence. After Auden, Mr. W. J. Turner's reflections on *The Theme of Love* seem comparatively simple, but his rhythms are as lifeless here as in *Talking with Soldiers*. The rest of the poetry is of little interest. Of the remaining articles and stories, Seán O'Casey's autobiographical sketch of the time of the Black-and-Tans in

[3]See the review in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (Summer, 1943). A new edition of this admirable little book has now appeared, with 39 more illustrations and 72 more pages of text, including some discussion of Spanish examples.

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Dublin has the most vitality, but its prose is over-ripe and melodramatic. Mr. Graham Greene's extracts from his diary, *Convoy to West Africa*, are offered as specimens of the novelist's way of collecting raw material, but there seems to be little point in publishing them.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to show that in spite of its good intentions and its attempts to be scholarly *The Mint* is really just another symptom of the prevailing confusion. Its casual variety, its dissipation of energy in matters of secondary interest (such as Mr. Rhys Davies's portrait of a Welsh nineteenth-century fantastic), its lack of any clearly grasped policy or standards—these are all caused by the conditions that produce the little reviews in all their pathetic diversity—and similarity. In such an unfavourable environment only unusual energy and consciousness of purpose can hope to bring together the scattered literary public and create the atmosphere in which positive creative achievement might be possible.

R. G. Cox.

DYLAN THOMAS

DEATHS AND ENTRANCES, by Dylan Thomas (*Dent*, 3/6).

Mr. Thomas is rich, and the fact that it is impossible to read more than a couple of pages of his writing without feeling quite certain about his richness indicates that he is prodigal as well. For Mr. Thomas is not afraid of adding image to image until the emotional content of his poems spills over and Mr. Read gasps 'these poems cannot be reviewed; they can only be acclaimed'. And the attitude of Mr. Read is not, on this occasion, unique, for the present volume has drawn an uncritical applause which must almost embarrass the poet, familiar as he must be with the sort of emotional prostration which has welcomed his latest volume. 'Talent' is a counter so frequently handled by his reviewers that it has lost whatever meaning it may have had, and 'genius' is now awarded as if it were a Defence Medal for a particularly short qualifying period of service. Miss Sitwell, that old champion of the new and vigorous, is prepared to write a prose poem to celebrate this latest volume—see her review in the April *Our Time*—but though she awards a bar to Mr. Thomas' 'genius', she is not prepared to discuss the matter critically. Clearly it is difficult to think in the presence of the emotions generated by these poems, and perhaps soon the questioning of those emotions will be regarded as a sacrilegious action; for the rich effluence of Dylan Thomas is more than a little touched with religiose qualities. Mr. Thomas is likely to assume, with the help of the acolyte critics, a priest-like position, the questioning of which will be regarded as heretical. The attaching of the emotions of religion to poetry seems again to have become a familiar procedure, and the 'religious' bias of Mr. Martin Browne's 'Poets' Theatre' not simply an idiosyncrasy of its manager.

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Though Mr. Thomas' words do not appear to have any clear intention towards the reader, they achieve a unity through atmosphere. They seem to be co-operating to an end, the colour of which has already been noted. Before considering this religiosity more closely, it would perhaps be as well to examine Mr. Thomas' claim to consideration as a craftsman, for in his 'craft or sullen art' we shall no doubt discover its force and through the evaluation of that claim gain some sort of indication of his possible worth as a 'religious writer', and not least of course, as a poet.

Mr. Thomas has developed several elaborate verse-techniques which have impressed many readers dulled by the fizz of loose current writing. Miss Sitwell, this time as a sort of popular voice, cautioned us—'Here alone among the poets of the younger generation is one who could produce sonnets worthy of our great heritage', and many intelligent writers have expressed their relief at the discipline and formal consideration which Mr. Thomas expends. However, whilst one is prepared to concede that the careful internal rhyming, assonance, alliteration, and technical lock, stock and barrel of a poem like 'The Conversation of Prayers' is no doubt conducive to the development of poetry as incantation, one is rather inclined to ask—its religious relevance apart for the moment—what the importance of incantation is construed to be by the poet. For though in the poem named a familiar sense of the general tragedy of things—particularly lovers and little children —is felt, it is difficult to follow the argument of the poem in terms of meaning. It has an emotional logic, which is to say that Mr. Thomas knows if this piece is added to that, the reader will feel something, but one cannot be certain that the poet's method was not precisely the same as the reader's response, that in spite of the superficial demonstration of 'craft' the poem is a demonstration of the 'sullen art' of feeling. The lovers and the children are recurrent terms of what is already being called Mr. Thomas' 'mythology'. The children sleep, or are 'king(s) of their six years', and are innocent—in fact are, when the garish 'mythological' decoration is stripped off them, exactly what Mabel Lucy Attwell found them to be; and the lovers weep, are mad, frustrated, tender, and so on, and are, in fact, exactly what the films, Shelley, and Lord Tennyson have presented them to be. This is not to say that Mr. Thomas does not present situations of complexity. He does, but what is said is never proportional in importance to the terrible difficulty he has found in saying it. Certainly something is happening in the following chaos of erotic imagery:

> There where a numberless tongue
> Wound their room with a male moan,
> His faith around her flew undone
> And darkness hung the walls with baskets of snakes,
> A furnace-nostrilled column-membered
> Super-or-near man
> Resembling to her dulled sense

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The thief of adolesence,
Early imaginary half remembered
Oceanic lover alone
Jealousy cannot forget for all her sakes,
Made his bad bed in her good
Night, and enjoyed as he would.
Crying, white gowned, from the middle moonlit stages
Out to the tiered and hearing tide,
Close and far she announced the theft of the heart
In the taken body at many ages,
Trespasser and broken bride
Celebrating at her side
All blood-signed assailings and vanished marriages in which
he had no lovely part
Nor could share, for his pride, to the least
Mutter and foul wingbeat of the solemnizing nightpriest
Her holy unholy hours with the always anonymous beast.

In this stanza of the poem 'Into her lying down head' the fantasy of either of the lovers seems to have been fair game. It is no use to ask why the 'tongue' is numberless, just as it is no use expecting the focus to be consistent. All elements of the sexual fantasy are given whatever place they are powerful enough to seize, and the writer is handled more than handling. Thus the first four lines appear to be concerned with the man of the poem's situation, whilst the rest is absorbed with the confusion of the woman, although the shift of emphasis appears to be blunt and arbitrary. And the continual use of suggestive hit-or-miss alternatives grouped together—possibly because Mr. Thomas wishes to convey his Freudian sense of the ambivalence of situations—is blunt rather than complex in its effect. 'Super or near man', and 'early imaginary half remembered', with 'his bad bed in her good night' seem to occur simply because the one word suggested its antithesis, and loose association out of the emotions of the experience has acquired on its own the importance of a technique. Frequently the mere sound of the words has taken over whatever selective capacity the poet may have, and 'the tiered and hearing tide' is, one supposes, intended to be music as much as anything. The argument of the poem cannot be followed clearly, though the use of 'lovely' in 'in which he had no lovely part' may be an indication of what Mr. Thomas is trying to state. One feels that the poem is occasioned by his disgust and resentment at finding no 'lovely part' in the experience, and that he has mistaken that reaction, because of its colour and violence, as poetry in itself. 'The always anonymous beast' is not really anonymous except when expressed as here in the unmanipulated and unaware terms of emotion, and though it is certain that these terms will always have some sort of relevance, one is inclined to say that the relevance is to the analyst's notebook rather than the pre-occupation of the critic.

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Although this stanza makes a pretty consistent play at presenting a complex 'form' we seem to be witnessing some sort of game in which the careless reader's feeling is the prize. That Mr. Thomas is playing at games does not become certain until we read his 'Vision and Prayer'.

This poem is difficult, but mainly for the printer. It is an excellent example of the typographical conceits which seem to have lately come into fashion again, and this, arranged in diamond form or as 'easter wings'—which no doubt makes it metaphysical—is surely a most preposterous case. Though it appears to have a number of key images, and its substance is of birth and blood, and its general implications religious in a rather sensational way—as if Mr. Thomas had suddenly discovered the birth and crucifixion all on his own—it presents such a welter of whatever slipped from the poetic tongue that the critical reader comes away with a sense of ripeness to the point of rottenness. An elaborate form again appears to have been imposed in the hope of preventing rotten tissues from falling apart.

I
Am found.
O let him
Scald me and drown
Me in his world'd wound.
His lightning answers my
Cry. My voice burns in his hand.
Now I am lost in the blinding
One. The sun roars at the prayer's end.

It is an attempt which is not likely to succeed and in this case the weltering emotion is finally revealed as a most tedious demonstration of self-pity, and the Christ born, and the Christ crucified are realized to be unhealthy displacements of the writer. Needless to say this sort of indulgence is not Christianity, whatever emotions have been appropriated for private purposes.

The complex verbal structures which Mr. Thomas offers have a mixed origin, but apart from the Auden of automatic writing—'Sir, no man's enemy forgiving all but will his negative inversion be prodigal', which is capped in the present volume with 'Friend by enemy I call you out'—Hopkins seems to have been largely drawn upon, though little appears to have been learnt from him. Mr. Thomas may write:

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness

but all that his ambiguities effect is confusion. Quite at a tangent to the intention of the poem the reader asks whether mankind does the 'making' in some way or other, when all Mr. Thomas is trying to say is that the darkness was responsible. Further, his use of 'striking' images the effect of which—after Mr. Spender—

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is to inject a little artificial activity into the fabric of the poem, becomes irritating to the reader who wants to know *why* the words are being used. The poet 'must enter again the round/Zion of the water bead/And the synagogue of the ear of corn', and we feel his solidarity with nature, but apart from helping us to know the religious mood of Mr. Thomas, and being 'striking' it is little enough that 'Zion' and 'Synagogue' do for 'bead' and 'corn'—although it might be suggested that the sentimental notion of nature's worship of God is present here. In proportion to the (rather Biblical) 'originality' of the images very little is done, and on analysis one feels that it has all been something of a circus show. The same characteristics are noticeable in phrases like: 'least valley of sackcloth'—'My holy lucky body'—'your prayed flesh'—'his grey-haired heart'—'spun bud of the world'—and many others. And there are other varieties too of this sort of poetic pseudo-statement. Familiar phrase forms are taken and doctored to this sort of effect: 'happy as the grass was green'—'happy as the heart was long'. And then there are the false analogies—a variety of 'striking' images—such as 'the children innocent as strawberries' which fall down as soon as analysed. Along with all this technical pretension Mr. Thomas can be pompously naïve. 'After this death, there is no other' he concludes one poem whilst the advice he gives his son—

> Good and bad, two ways
> Of moving about your death
> By the grinding sea,
> King of your heart in the blind days,
> Blow away like breath,
> Go crying through you and me
> And the souls of all men
> Into the innocent
> Dark, and the guilty dark, and good
> Death, and bad death . . .

concludes:

> Die in unjudging love.

Which appears to be a piece of anarchistic confusion which Godwin would have applauded.

I believe that it will probably be argued somewhere among the litter of artistic periodicals that it is unnecessary for Mr. Thomas to yield much to analysis, or even to be particularly coherent. They will say that the emotion generated by his incantation—and anyone who has heard Mr. Thomas reading his own poems over the air will agree that he must regard them as incantatory—is its own and the poem's justification. The argument for sensation by sensationalists is familiar, and one might as well say that a blow on the head is justified by the dizziness it induces. There is, however, at the same time the not unimportant consideration of why the blow was administered at all. It is this area of the experience which Mr. Thomas does not contemplate. As for incan-

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tation, it no doubt had a musical relevance for Swinburne and possesses a ritualistic significance for the Australian aborigine. In respect of Mr. Thomas however, it merely links up with his religiosity, and if in that it ministers to his emotional needs I am sure no-one will deny him that degree of satisfaction. It should be clear, however, that the processes involved are not of very great importance to poetic expression; the experience of emotional satisfaction or indulgence is not straightaway the experience of poetry.

Mr. Thomas does not offer very much to the literary critic for analysis. He is responsible for a great deal which transcends analysis in the work of other young writers. He offers at best an appeal to the sophisticated eye on the look-out for the cheap *frisson* of recognizing a trick which some other competitive poetry-lover missed. Clever-boy pranks in verbal gymnastics are a rather touching tribute to the critics who have over a period of some twenty years attempted to establish the seriousness of poetry, but such exhibitions cannot be mistaken for seriousness themselves. Mr. Thomas is a poet who can unselfconsciously—and without any humour apparently—make

O

the first line of a two-stanza poem, and twelve lines afterwards to maintain the stunning effect offer the rhyme

No

to a craft-starved public. I doubt whether this *ersatz* will satisfy the real hunger, or whether Mr. Thomas from deep within the tradition of Chattertonian boy wonders and poetic raving will ever be able to offer satisfaction, for it seems certain that he does not wish to be placed anywhere else.

WOLF MANKOWITZ.

ELUCIDATING ELIOT

'FOUR QUARTETS' REHEARSED, by Raymond Preston (Sheed and Ward, 5/-).

The author calls 'this brief record of several readings of *Four Quartets*' 'at best, an experiment in interpretation' and adds 'what is needed to correct the deficiencies of one's personal reading is not an exchange of critical gun-fire, but quiet co-operative discussion of detail'. Unfortunately, I am bound to disagree. Mr. Preston's book raises a critical point of the first importance which if settled against him makes most of his interpretation at best unnecessary and at the worst seriously misleading. So that, although the book tempts one to suggest different ways of taking details, I am going to resist the temptation in favour of a fundamental discussion, which I hope can be conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation rather than spiteful sharp-shooting or the boom of heavy artillery.

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I can think of no poem of our time which makes such demands on the reader as *Four Quartets,* and in arguing that Mr. Preston's interpretation amounts to a misreading of the poem, I am not in a position to offer a completely satisfactory reading as a model. Nevertheless one can be fairly positive about the general nature of the poem and the kind of distinction the poet has achieved. To take the latter point first, it is a triumph of *intelligence* to have been able to render so much of the poem in terms of 'concrete' images of immediate feeling and sensation which make a direct impact, doing and not merely stating. Secondly, the whole cycle is not something which can be even roughly summed up as a statement or an affirmation. It is rather an examination in which, as it were, negative results are as important as positive results. Thirdly, it is a triumph of *continence,* in refusing to go beyond what was given or found.

Now, if these principles or something like them are accepted, an exacting discipline is imposed on the critic. My general impression of Mr. Preston's book is that, perhaps unwittingly, he has relaxed this discipline and in so doing presents an almost perfect example showing that the theological approach is or tends to be a handicap to the critic. It would seem at first sight as if 'those . . . who profess a faith', as Mr. Preston puts it, should be admirably equipped for dealing with what is after all religious poetry. Mr. Preston is quick to note and detect the faintest allusions to orthodox theology, allusions which those not so well versed in the writings of the Doctors and the Saints might never notice. He quivers in response like a musical instrument when certain sounds are made in the room. His approach to the cycle is respectful, even reverent. He ends his book with the words 'Finally, to understand *Four Quartets* we need to live with them, and even to live by them'. He doesn't gush over his author or use his commentary to display his own erudition. But it is just this willingness to respond which leads him to ignore the characteristic reticence and holding back, the refusal to identify the positions won in the course of exploration with the accepted framework of orthodox belief, features which above all others make this poem great poetry as well as great religious poetry.

Mr. Preston must have read of this temptation. Indeed, he seems at times to be saying something very similar. 'It is unnecessary, in reading Section III, to remember that the opening lines contain three phrases adapted from the first speech of *Samson Agonistes*; more relevant is Eliot's debt to St. John of the Cross, though a student of that saint will not necessarily be more responsive to Eliot's verse than a sensitive reader who has never heard of him'. 'It is possible to provide notes on the literary associations of sapphires and axle-trees, but I am inclined to think that more important than any meaning we may subsequently find for the images, is the nature of their immediate impact'. These are by no means all the flashes of 'light' to be found in the commentary. Yet Mr. Preston does not let this insight direct him to the method

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such *aperçus* should impose. He is rather like a blindfolded child, now 'hot' and much more often 'cold', and alternating rapidly from one to the other.

It is because of these passages which are excellent as far as they go, that in justice to Mr. Preston one must speak of a *tendency* to misread. What is misleading is the total effect. Although I don't suppose Mr. Preston really thinks so, he writes as if he thought that Eliot was in a position similar to that of Dante, that his concern was to embody in poetic form the eternal truths of religion. Mr. Preston quotes Brother George Every as follows: ' . . . Religious feeling has to be translated in terms of physical sensation if it is to be made real again to those who are finding their way from a belief that only the physical is real to a renewed belief in the metaphysical'. The vision in Section I of *Burnt Norton* is described as an *allegory*. Hence he always tries to say what each image *is*. For instance, 'The rose-garden is the Garden "where all loves end" of *Ash Wednesday*, and "last of earth left to discover" of *Little Gidding*. It is "our first world", "that which was the beginning", the Earthly Paradise'. Commenting on the passage ending

Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty

he writes, 'This is the joy of Eden, shattered when the divine light is withdrawn'.

It is but a step from this to treating Eliot as matter for edification. That this step has been taken more than once will be apparent to any reader. Here is the beginning of a summary of *East Coker*.

> 'Because knowledge derived from experience is so often untrustworthy—such, very briefly, is the argument of the poem—the only possible wisdom is humility. At a certain stage of spiritual progress, the soul must put itself into the hands of God; die in order to be born again'.

And he interprets the theme of the opening lines of Section III as being 'not merely physical death, but the darkness and destruction of the Last Judgment'. He ends his commentary on *The Dry Salvages* with the sentence, '*The Dry Salvages* begins with what looks like the pagan vision, and ends with the Christian'.

Unless it is because he regards the poems as meditations on well-known religious themes, I cannot understand why Mr. Preston spends so much time quoting from St. John of the Cross. As will be seen from my quotations, Mr. Preston does not regard the hunting up of allusions and parallels as in itself a worthy pastime. And we may well wonder what conception of the poems (and what readers!) was in his mind when he wrote (p. 33): 'A study of St. John of the Cross is outside the scope of this essay; but readers who cannot follow the sense of the remainder of this strophe will, I think, find their immediate difficulties removed by the second paragraph of the passage from Aquinas which I quoted earlier'. Mr.

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Preston is speaking about the end of Section III of *East Coker*, where his zeal has, I think, led to an unconvincing interpretation:

> 'In order to arrive there,
> To arrive *where you are* . . .
>
> is Eliot's adaptation of St. John's phrase, "In order to arrive at being everything"—in other words, at complete realization of one's potentialities, which *in time* are always in process of being realized'.

But this is not the gravamen of the charge. The danger of this book is that it will lead an innocent reader to substitute a body of conventional thought for the fresh original thought of the poet. Mr. Preston does *not* want to save the reader the trouble of reading Eliot, but his book *does* save the reader the trouble of understanding the poem. The temptation is offered, I am convinced, in all innocence. There is no *calculated* irrelevance. It is merely the result of relaxing critical discipline. 'In spite of its virtue, the wisdom of the countryman rooted in village tradition and the life of the countryside and the procession of the seasons is in the end joyless'. When we ask in what phrases of the poem (Section I of *East Coker*) this joylessness is manifested, we are referred in a foot-note to 'This is substantially a statement made by Mr. Eliot during the Malvern Conference, 1941'.

An allied misconception, which I feel sure that Mr. Preston would repudiate if it were put to him in this form, runs through the commentary. It is that Eliot was substantially in the position of Donne, struggling towards faith. Commenting on the opening of *Burnt Norton* he writes, 'The poet is expressing a state which is neither faith nor doubt: he is *on the edge of faith*'. Elsewhere he is anxious to show that faith triumphs over despair. For instance, of Section II of *The Dry Salvages* he writes, 'The passage *appears* to be an expression of profound despair and fatalism, as if continued existence in this "time" were felt as an intolerable stagnation ('Ridiculous the waste sad time . . . ')—a movement which as the verse form suggests is not movement, because moving to no goal. But even while the poet builds this castle of despair, he shows us that there is only sand to build it on: for the theme of the Annunciation, hinted in the first stanza, is echoed antiphonally in the stanzas which follow and directly stated—*breathed*—in the last:

> . . . Only the hardly, barely prayable

Prayer of the one Annunciation'. 'Eliot spoke in *East Coker* of the fear of "belonging . . . to God". He has, in these two or three pages, directed an immense imaginative power and subtlety of poetic resource towards undermining this fear by means of fundamental human terrors, the reality of which we cannot gainsay. And after this, there is the calm voice summing up—and what concentrated attention it commands!". The effect of passages such

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as these is to suggest that Eliot is a comfortable author. Which is not what Mr. Preston intended. His view is expressed in his final remarks on *Little Gidding*. 'The joy felt in these lines has been won, the faith has come of facing despair and conquering it'. For Mr. Preston *Four Quartets* might have been entitled *Look, we have come through*!

Readers of this journal are familiar with the point I have been trying to establish. That it should have been missed or so very imperfectly grasped by such a decent, modest and conscientious writer as Mr. Preston shows himself to be on every page, must be the excuse for noticing this book at such length. Good criticism of Eliot's poetry is hard to come by, but I would suggest that 'those . . . who profess a faith' might re-read with profit the articles which have appeared in *Scrutiny* and in particular the following passage:

> ' . . . these are, no doubt, statements, to be taken as such; but though they imply a theological context, their actual context is the poem. It would be absurd to contend that the passage is not an invitation to a relating of the two contexts, but nothing is gained from the point of view of either poetry or religion by an abandonment of one context for the other, or by an approach that refuses or ignores or relaxes the peculiar discipline that the poetry is. And the critic can hardly insist too much that this affirmation which seems to strain forward out of the poem must, by the reader of the poem, be referred back to what has gone before. And he who doesn't read the poem ignores the poet's genius even while applauding'.

H. A. MASON.

MALINOWSKI

THE DYNAMICS OF CULTURE CHANGE, by Bronislaw Malinowski. Ed. by Phyllis M. Kaberry (Yale University Press, $2.50, Oxford University Press, 16/6).

Malinowski died in 1943, leaving behind him a number of notes on culture contact and change. He had intended eventually to produce a book on this subject, in collaboration with Dr. Kaberry, who has now edited his notes and added to them sections of Malinowski's published articles to form the present work. It was never planned in book form by Malinowski, and by linking together the notes in the form of a book, Dr. Kaberry has been able to do little more than produce a number of reflections around one or two common themes, with a mere illusion of sustained argument. Her respectful anxiety to preserve intact as many sentences written by her teacher as possible has resulted in numerous repetitions of ideas. These are natural enough in a mass of scattered notes, but should not have been allowed to persist in the finished book. Less

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discipular enthusiasm, and more regard for a concise exposition of the subject would have resulted in a shorter book, and most of the essential material here could have been incorporated in one or two lengthy essays. The pretentious title, too, might well have been replaced by the more accurate sub-title, *An Inquiry Into Race Relations in Africa*, since the book makes no contribution to anthropological theory beyond that already made and published elsewhere by Malinowski. In fact, this is a 'popular' book, written primarily to win sympathy, particularly official sympathy, for approaches to colonial administrative problems based upon knowledge gained in anthropological research. It is well documented propaganda, and written in a good cause, but one could wish that the book as a whole were consistently directed at a particular public, instead of assuming different publics on different pages. Alternatively, it might have justified its title by concentrating a little more on making some theoretical contribution.

The book is divided into two parts. The first consists of a number of essays on the scope and nature of anthropological investigation, and to readers of Malinowski's earlier works will be familiar ground. The second part analyses in some detail several of the more important types of conflict and misunderstanding which arise between Africans and Europeans living in contact with each other. Here Malinowski's journalistic facility for easy generalisation is confined to specific questions of maladjustment, and the second part, though no newer than the first from an anthropological point of view, is considerably more satisfactory. The potential field of anthropological study is wide, and the study itself comparatively undeveloped, and it is only by adhering to the study of social phenomena which are easily specified that the anthropologist can avoid deceiving himself with purely verbal definitions and conclusions. Such is that with which the first essay begins:

> 'Culture change is the process by which the existing order of a society, that is, its social, spiritual and material civilization, is transformed from one type into another'.

General definitions of this sort mean very little from the scientific point of view which Malinowski attempts to adopt. No 'types' of civilization have as yet been defined, and a generalization like the one quoted is useless as an instrument for investigating the results of, for example, the replacement of a tribal chief by a paid European official.

Malinowski does demonstrate, ably and convincingly, the practical value of anthropological findings to colonial government; he points out also that the only approach in field-work which can be of such value is that based upon what he calls 'the functional theory of culture'. 'Functional' is by now a much misused and ambiguous word in anthropology. Originally, asserting that a society was not merely a haphazard assortment of culture traits, but was an organic whole in which inter-related institutions

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organized human activities around a consistent system of values, the functionalist school made possible a necessary reorientation of interest in the study of primitive society. Malinowski did a great deal towards leading the reaction against the influence of the historical schools, with their constant preoccupation with purely conjectural 'origins' and 'developments'. He soundly concentrated rather on the essential similarities of primitive and civilized life than on the superficially more startling contrasts between them, and examined primitive communities as living organisms while others were studying them as museum specimens, illustrating posited stages in the development of Western European civilization. Since then, the revolution in anthropological study has been more or less completed, and it seems undesirable to continue the use of the word 'function' in speaking of social institutions, as it tends to be used in a quite illegitimate teleological sense.

Malinowski's opinion of the exclusive value of his method of investigation leads him naturally into opposition, not only to the antiquarian or merely curious interests of some anthropologists, but also to those who attempt, by historical reconstruction of the conjectured state of African society before European conquest, to provide themselves with a norm of social integration against which the degree of disintegration brought about by European contact can be assessed. Some of the features of earlier types of social organization can, he agrees, be fairly certainly reconstructed, but since they are no longer empirically verifiable, and, except in special instances, persist little as influences on the present situation, they cannot figure very importantly in a study of what is happening now. 'It is essential' he says, 'not to confuse the reconstructed past with the reality of what still survives as a vital residue of past history'. Here one is in total agreement. Monographs too often make it impossible to decide what the effective influence of belief and custom at the time of the investigation actually is, and whether the writer is describing the life of to-day or reconstructing that of twenty or thirty years ago. While, however, this distinction must be made, there is always a danger amongst those followers of Malinowski who tend to exaggerate his views that one value of historical reconstruction may be forgotten. The change taking place in African society to-day is in many ways no more than an extreme example of the changes undergone by all small scale communities affected by the Industrial Revolution. It is taking place with greater speed, and consequently with greater intensity and more obvious conflicts and disturbances, and it is complicated by colour discrimination and other factors. In the material sense, some things are being gained, but in other ways much of importance has been lost. It is of considerable interest for us to know as much as possible about the nature of those elements in stable, small-scale communities which are rapidly disappearing, and of those values which are disappearing along with conditions permitting of their constant expression and reassertion. To be 'practical' and 'scientific' in Malinowski's sense,

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is no *substitute* for this qualitative interest in social organization. In fact, of course, Malinowski is bound to conjecture, though with very good evidence, a type of social stability which has largely disappeared in Africa, since without such reconstruction institutions which persist from the older social organization would be isolated and meaningless.

Although, in writing of the value and limitations of history, he adopts a quite acceptable attitude towards historical reconstruction as it affects the study of African society to-day, he goes too far when he speaks of changes in Africa as possessing 'a cultural determinism which is neither African nor European' and 'a process and reality *sui generis*'. While rightly dismissing the idea that it is possible to study the changed situation by assuming that mixed African and European institutions can be considered as integrated parts of a mixed community—the District Officer functioning as the chief, the missionary as a tribal priest and so on, he goes on to say that

> 'a native congregation under the supervision and guidance of white clergy; a mine or factory where African labour works under the direction of white staff; a bush school where African children are taught by European teachers . . . '

are 'new forms of social organization'. Except in a very elementary and unimportant way, this is not true. A bush school, or a factory, are essentially European in principle. It is because there is no such 'new form of social organization' as Malinowski suggests that contradictions arise in Africa, and it is the extent and nature of these contradictions that the anthropologist can point out. European education inculcates eventually European attitudes and creates European appetites, and no middle way between ultimate admission, for better or worse, into the large scale European society, and exclusion and segregation, exists. The factory in which African labour is working is consistent with other forms of European social organization, and inconsistent with the tribal way of life. Anthropologists can point out where this inconsistency causes most suffering and conflict, but scientific investigation cannot solve problems of administrative policy. Malinowski sometimes appears to suggest that scientific evidence shows the necessity for certain moral attitudes. For example:

> 'The anthropologist must insist that a substantially increased measure of real and tangible benefits is necessary, in the interests not only of the African, but of the white community. In the long run, African and European interests converge because stable and effective rule by a minority can only be founded on the real satisfaction, prosperity and welfare of the natives'.

Unless he is admitted into administrative councils and is able to accept full responsibility, as an informed government officer, for

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policies initiated by him, the anthropologist is not in a position to insist upon any policy at all. He can reveal contradictions in policy, and suggest what its effects will probably be. His work may also show the government what the most expedient course of action would be likely to be, but the solution of anthropological problems is not, as Malinowski seems to suggest, the solution also of moral problems. And throughout this book one is never sure for very long with which type of problem he is dealing. One reads, for example:

> 'It will be easily seen that the real problem in culture change does not lie in the mechanism and technicalities of law, but in the consideration of how a minimum of natural wealth must be left to the native, and how he must be assisted in his natural development by modern methods with due regard given to European interests'.

The real problem, then, is largely a moral problem. Elsewhere we find that the anthropologist investigating culture change

> 'need not either resort to the historical comparison of pre-European conditions, nor yet introduce any moral or specifically normative values'.

So after all, the problems are scientific? It is inevitable that there should be inconsistency of this sort in a book put together as this is. The fault, however, is partly Malinowski's, in that he tries to appeal to too many types of reader at once, and varies his manner accordingly. Here he writes as an anthropologist, interested in the advancement of scientific method and hypothesis; then he becomes a government adviser; next he is a sympathetic and informed member of the general public, with his heart in the right place; then again, a diplomatist and tactician. No one can adopt so many positions satisfactorily in 162 pages.

Since a great deal is made in this book of what is termed 'the three column approach' to the problems of culture change, some passing reference must be made to it. Briefly, he suggests that data available are to be systematized in three main, and one or two subsidiary columns, the contents of which are to be kept distinct from each other. The main column headings are to be

(a) White influences, interests and intentions.
(b) Processes of culture contact and change.
(c) Surviving forms of tradition.

and the rest, a column for features of the reconstructed African past, and one for 'new forces of spontaneous African re-integration or reaction'. This 'system' was perhaps useful for instruction in Malinowski's seminars, as any hints on organizing a complex and confusing mass of factors might be useful. But no theoretical contribution is made in reproducing it and referring to it at con-

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siderable length in this book, and the disproportion between its intrinsic value and that ascribed to it throughout the book eventually makes the 'three column approach' appear rather absurd.

Apart from these faults, the general reader will find the examples quoted in detail of some interest, even if he is unable to accept anthropological investigation as such a general remedy for African complaints as Malinowski suggests. There are many over-simplifications which give themselves away in the course of the work, as when at one point he says that 'the pre-European situation (of the tribal chief) implied absolute sovereignty,—complete and undivided power, the right to carry on war and slave raids and to control the wealth of the tribe', while admitting elsewhere that, in recognizing the chief without recognizing other sources of authority within the tribe, early European administration helped to destroy some of the important checks which the old system imposed on his power. As propaganda the book may be of some value, and one may suppose that, had Malinowski had the opportunity of writing the whole himself in the form of a book, some more considerable anthropological interest would have attached to it. As it stands, it attempts to cover the same theoretical ground as a recent book by Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, but does so in a more superficial way. This is to be expected, perhaps, where an attempt to persuade a general audience conflicts with a feeling of obligation to contribute towards the development of sociological theory.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

BRITISH COUNCIL RECORDINGS

PURCELL: *Dido and Aeneas* (Philharmonia String Orchestra conducted by Constant Lambert, with Joan Hammond, Isobel Baillie, Edith Coates, Dennis Noble, Gladys Ripley, Sylvia Patriss). H.M.V. under auspices of British Council.

An adequate modern recording of this central English classic was overdue; and this one should meet with an enthusiastic reception. It is not perfect by a long way; my set at least suffers from a mechanical defect which blurs the high notes (on several gramophones electrical and acoustic, all normally excellent); and the spirit of the performance perhaps lacks the intimacy appropriate to baroque chamber opera, despite a superbly witch-like performance by Edith Coates and the convincingly authentic sound of Boris Ord's continuo playing. Nonetheless to listen to these records is a most moving and satisfying experience; when we have absorbed them we shall understand much more about not only Purcell, but

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about contemporary English music too, and about the problems with which English composers were faced after the breakdown of our musical continuity.

To my mind the most interesting aspect of these records is the modification which they suggest in the British Council's attitude to recorded music. Previously they have recorded only contemporary works, which is understandable since their aim was primarily to publicize British music of our own time, to show how alive our musical culture now is. But it seems to me equally important to stress the fact that we have a musical past as good as anyone else's and, at one of the greatest periods in musical history, perhaps better than most. The notion that the English aren't (or weren't until recently) particularly musical is the result of the barbarous popular conception of musical culture as something which appertains exclusively to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during which period it is certainly true that we had, mainly for social and economic reasons, virtually no significant music. But as a more civilized notion of the evolution of musical culture slowly develops (there are plenty of signs of it), and as the sixteenth century in particular becomes reinstated, it is surely not too much to hope that the relatively vast public which at least pays lip-service to Shakespeare might (*given the opportunity*) come to see that we have in Byrd, Gibbons, Bull, Dowland and Tallis—to mention only the supreme names—composers who are a complementary phenomenon to Shakespeare and, in the case of Byrd at least, a composer of Shakespearean (or Bachian or Beethovian) stature.

Here surely is an opportunity for the British Council. Our great music of the Shakespearean period is still known only to specialists or anyway to people of specialized interests because the average 'concert-goer' never gets an opportunity to hear it. Of course I know the orchestral-music fan has an initial prejudice against sixteenth century polyphony and all it entails; but how can you expect to change this except by giving him opportunities to hear the music? I can testify from personal experience in adult education work that a class of very 'average' orchestral-concert-goers can find, say, the Byrd Five Part Mass and the big pavanes and galliards of Bull and Gibbons intensely moving and a revolutionary experience in the hint which they offer of different musical horizons. I've had to repeat the Byrd Mass several times; and have been unable to fulfil the demand for more simply owing to the lack of adequate recordings. It is indeed scandalous that the Decca recording of the Byrd Mass is the only good modern recording of the *great* works of the period in the catalogues. Cannot the British Council give us a substantial album of Byrd (say the Great Service, some Latin motets, the Four Part Mass, and the magnificent Six Part String Fantasia which is so beautifully played by the Jacques String Orchestra); an album of Gibbons (the Big Service, an anthem or two, the pavanes and galliards for virginals and, if a suitable instrument could be found, the Four Part Fantasia and the Fancy in Gamutt Flat for organ); a volume

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of instrumental music by Bull (again the big works for virginals and organ—the Walsingham variations, Queen Elizabeth's Pavane, the 'sinfoniae' pavanes, and the profound A minor *In nomine*); a selection from Dowland's *Pilgrime's Solace* (if an adequate lutenist can be found); Tallis's *Lamentations*; Taverner's *Western Wynde* Mass; and a selection of the most serious and important string music of Ferrabosco, William Lawes and Jenkins?

The remarkable success of Decca's records of the Byrd Five Part Mass seems to suggest that a series of records such as those suggested above (and they're no more than a start) needn't be commercially a failure. But even if a little money were lost on them it would be worth it, considering that they would offer to thousands of people their first opportunity to hear some of the greatest music that any country has produced, and to gain some idea of what the English musical tradition really stands for. Even if they weren't a popular success (though I believe they, relatively, would be) and were regarded more as an educational venture, they could, if used in adult education work and in schools over the whole country, in a few years make a difference to the general level of musical literacy and cultivation which would be of the utmost benefit not only to the 'public' but to all composers working in England to-day. There are only two provisos: the music selected *must* be the big works, the representative (but tragically unknown) ones; for the idea one gets of our great music from the few tiny 'charming' snippets that are normally played is about comparable with the notion one would have of Mozart if one knew him only by the divertimenti he wrote when he was eighteen, rather than by the G Minor Quintet or Symphony; and the performances *must* be both authentic (scholarly) *and of competent virtuosity*.

BERLIOZ: *Harold in Italy* (played by Boston Symphony Orchestra with William Primrose, viola, conducted by Koussevitzky). H.M.V.

These records are (the cliché is for once justifiable) terrific, the most exciting recording that has come my way since Decca's version of the Byrd Five Part Mass. Put on the fugato opening of *Harold* and *listen*. It isn't only that the music is so electrically original: what is remarkable is the extraordinary tautness of the draughtsmanship, the linear conception, the lyrical vitality which is at once copious and astringent. It is utterly unlike any representative nineteenth century music, melodic in impetus, pure in texture and harmony and without, anywhere, a vestige of padding; and nothing could be more essentially musical in structure and evolution (however literary the programme). Or listen to the Pilgrims' March, so apparently simple, yet always doing the unexpected thing at the ends of the phrases, always demanding the alertest response; or to the brigands whose 'frenzy' is

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disciplined by such classical lucidity of texture and such subtlety of formalization. Put this movement beside even such a fine work as Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and it is the Stravinsky that sounds old-fashioned; the whole of the bridge passage at the beginning of the movement and the miraculous reminiscence of the Pilgrims' song towards the end are imaginative conceptions which could occur only to the very highest type of genius. And my conviction is strengthened that Berlioz is immeasurably the greatest composer since Beethoven—that he belongs indeed alongside Beethoven, the mature Mozart, Bach, Monteverdi, Lasso, Josquin and Byrd. We need more recordings of Berlioz's big, later works (the only Berlioz work widely known, the *Symphonie Fantastique*, is after all his *first* representative work, written at the age of twenty-six), notably the Te Deum, more of *L'Enfance du Christ*, and above all the *Grande Messe des Morts*, to my mind his greatest work (though I've never heard *Les Troyens*), and one of the supreme things in European music. An admirable French recording of the Mass already exists (the B.B.C. broadcast some of it a few months back); cannot we have an English pressing?

W.H.M.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Job*, a Masque for Dancing (B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult. H.M.V.).

BLISS: Ballet Suite; *Miracle in the Gorbals* (Royal Opera House Orchestra conducted by Constant Lambert. Columbia).

RAWSTHORNE: Overture; *Street Scene* (Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Constant Lambert. H.M.V.).

POULENC: *Le Bestiare* and *Montparnasse* (Bernac and Poulenc. H.M.V.).

The recording of Vaughan Williams's *Job* which I've so often pleaded for in these pages has come at last, and it's worth waiting for. Perhaps, now we've had a chance to get to know the records of the D Major Symphony, *Job* seems, by comparison with that more recent and 'classically' great work, not quite as independent of the stage business as one had remembered it as being. But it contains superb things (particularly the Sons of the Morning) and the music as a whole is built on a Blakean scale; one doesn't need to say more to indicate that, as well as a key work in the English tradition, it is one of the great achievements of contemporary music. Performance and recording are excellent.

Miracle in the Gorbals, like much of Bliss's most successful music, is sheer melodrama, but as such highly effective. The general impression is more relaxed than *Checkmate*; it hasn't the earlier ballet's acidulated venom and economy, and has (for the young lovers) passages of an amiably Tchaikovian *allure* and even

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one hunk of pure Gershwin; the scene of the killing is itself much less blood-curdling than the comparable one in *Checkmate*. Taking it all round it is music of charm and devilish competence; and it has Bliss's habitual instinct for physical movement. In his own genre, none of our composers can rival him.

Alan Rawsthorne has the admirable ability to compose 'light' and film music which fulfils its required function without calling for any sacrifice of the idiom's integrity; no-one would think of calling *Street Scene* (which was intended as a 'popular' piece) highbrow, while at the same time one can never have any doubt about it being Rawsthorne. It's a brilliantly written, emotionally fresh piece; though I hope the British Council's choice of it does not mean that they have passed by Rawsthorne's most representative and important works, the *Piano Concerto* and the *Symphonic Studies*. They both ought to be recorded.

Of the two Poulenc songs *Le Bestiare* group was written when the composer was nineteen or twenty, the other one quite recently; and one can't say that he's got much wiser in the last twenty-five years. Indeed there's nothing in the relatively lush juicy drawing-room music of his later years to come up to the tender Satiean purity of his very first work (one many mention in particular 'La Carpe' from the *Bestaire songs*). Nonetheless the drawing-room music is excellent of its kind (it's directly in the tradition of Renaldo Hahn), and the songs are remarkable for their sensitiveness to the French language. Perhaps this is why the late songs are always melodically so much more interesting than the piano pieces.

But this record—and the others these artists have recently made in England—is chiefly notable for the performance. Although one wouldn't think of Poulenc as anything but a very little composer, and although Bernac's magnificent voice perhaps isn't *quite* what it used to be, yet the performances of these two seem to have generations of tradition and artistry behind them. Because the traditions of French culture have been relatively so continuous, they have a 'flair', a quality of civilization, which artists in this country find it difficult or impossible to attain to. To listen to them is an education of the spirit. The recording is both resonant and delicate.

W.H.M.

SCRUTINY is published by the Editors, Downing College, Cambridge; distributed by Deighton, Bell & Co., Ltd., Trinity Street, Cambridge; and printed by S. G. Marshall & Son, Round Church Street, Cambridge, England.

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